

Foreword

It is the obligation and privilege of every community to educate its children.

Since Judge Augustus Porter donated land for a schoolhouse on Second Street, the community of what was once Manchester, and which eventually joined with its neighbors, Suspension Bridge and LaSalle, to become the City of Niagara Falls, that obligation has been honored.

Buildings have changed. Lessons have changed. People have changed.

What remains constant is the fulfillment by successive generations of the sacred trust to empower youth by sharing with them the great discoveries and accepted orders of the academic disciplines.

It is on this foundation democracy rests.

It is also on this foundation that communities ties are formed, memories forged, and friendships made.

What follows is a brief history of public schools in our community. The creation of this book owes much to Patricia Wilson Rice's School Bells Ring, and to published columns in the Niagara Gazette by Norma Higgs. With thanks to them and for the benefit of students past, present, and future, the Niagara Falls City School District presents School Days.

Written by Judie Glaser, Community Relations Director, Niagara Falls City School District. Glaser is a graduate of SUNY, College at Buffalo, MS, BA; Niagara County Community College, AAS; and Leadership Niagara. She has worked in the District Public Relations Office for 17 years. She believes communities should teach -- and learn from -- succeeding generations. Her greatest educators continue to be her children. MTATSITS

Author's note: As a matter of preference, I have omitted all titles of Mr., Miss, Ms. or Mrs. from this historical review, in the belief that one's marital status has little or nothing to do with the matter at hand. I have also endeavored to identify each woman by her first name, even if the custom at the time was to identify her by her husband's name (Mrs. John Smith), so that we may properly recall the efforts of the individual relative to public education. I believe this to be appropriate; after all, we educate each individual to realize his, or her, full potential.



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Famous Names

Schools of today and yesterday have borne the names of some of Niagara Falls' most prominent citizens of days gone by. Here is a refresher of who's who:

Harry F. Abate (1904 – 1969) – Deputy Superintendent of Schools and namesake of Abate Elementary. Abate was a native of Italy who began teaching in the District in 1928. In 1942 he was appointed Principal of Niagara Street School; in 1960, he became Director of Secondary Education. In 1961 he became Deputy Superintendent. He was the head of a committee of District personnel and residents working on the plans to integrate Beech Avenue Schools at the time of his death in 1969.

Thomas Evershed (1817 – 1890) – An engineer who proposed a means of harnessing the power of the Falls by constructing a canal and a tunnel, his concept was to divert the water above the Falls through a canal, power turbines with that water, and discharge it into the Lower River.

Charles B. Hyde (died 1921) – The owner of a paper company at the corner of Sugar Street, he died in 1921, leaving his estate to wife, Emily. Upon her death, she left much of the land that comprises Hyde Park to the city. Sugar Street was renamed Hyde Park Boulevard.

Col. Charles B. Gaskill (1851- 1913) – Born in Wilson, Charles Gaskill was a war hero who fought in the Civil and Spanish-American wars. He was brevetted major for meritorious conduct at the Battle of Gaines' Mills, and was brevetted lieutenant colonel for meritorious conduct at the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Gaskill started a newspaper in his youth, opened a flour mill after his service in the wars, built a pulp mill, and assisted in creating the Niagara Falls Power Company. He took over the horse car lines in the villages of Niagara Falls and Suspension Bridge and converted them into an electric railroad, and was president of the Niagara Falls and Suspension Bridge Railway Company. He served for a time as president of the Village of Niagara Falls and, during his time as a member of the Board of Education, was instrumental in establishing the pension system for teachers.

He died at Memorial Hospital in 1919. He is buried at Oakwood Cemetery.

Henry J. Kalfas (1925 – 2006) – Superintendent of Schools 1969-1978 and the founder of the Festival of Lights. A World War II Marine, he was a teacher at Center Avenue Elementary School, principal of Beech Avenue School and North Junior High School, and as Superintendent, oversaw the integration of the schools.

Robert de La Salle (René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, 1643 – 1687) – A French explorer who, with Fr. Hennepin, is believed to be the first European to explore the region. LaSalle explored the Great Lakes in the U.S. and Canada, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mississippi River and surrounding area, which he claimed for France. It is from his three-masted, seven cannon ship, Le Griffon, that the yearbook at LaSalle Senior High School took its name, which is used by LaSalle Prep School today.

Geraldine J Mann (1911 – 1980) – The Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education who worked in the District for 28 years, Mann served as Director of Elementary Education.

James Fullerton Trott (1815-1898): One of the six original Board of Education members, Trott married the youngest daughter of Cataract House owner Parkhurst Whitney, Celinda Eliza. Supervisor of the Town of Niagara (when it included what is now Niagara Falls) for six years, he served on the library board as well as the Board of Education. A native Bostonian, a businessman and hotelier, Trott influenced public education in Niagara Falls for 50 years and oversaw the development of the school system.

General Parkhurst Whitney (1784-1862): A US Army General in the War of 1812, the man who named Three Sisters Islands was a settler of the area and owned the famed hotel Cataract House; he previously owned Eagle Tavern. When Niagara Falls incorporated as a village in 1847, he was elected President of the Village Officers. An engineer as well as a hotelier, he and Augustus Porter developed the first bridge to Goat Island, the first staircase from Prospect Point to the base of the Falls, and ferry service across the river.

1800-1902

In the beginning ...

In 1848, the Village of Niagara Falls incorporated.

In 1854, the Village of Suspension Bridge (Bellevue) incorporated.

In 1892, the Villages became the City of Niagara Falls.

In 1927, LaSalle joined the City.

Municipalities

Manchester

This European name was first used to refer to the original area during the time it was occupied by the Native Americans; later it became the Village of Niagara Falls. In 1892, when the Village merged with Suspension Bridge to form the City of Niagara Falls, it brought about two-thirds of the land to the deal, but, according to news reports at the time, the Village brought not one dollar to city coffers while Suspension Bridge added \$6,000 to the pot.

Public education began in Manchester in 1814 under the direction of the first school commissioner, General Parkhurst Whitney. He built the first schoolhouse near Eagle Tavern on Falls Street. The Union Chapel was both a school and the site of church services.

In the hamlet of Niagara Falls, public education began in several one-room schoolhouses. The first, located on Second Street near the old NY Central Railroad tracks, occupied land donated for that purpose by Judge Augustus Porter in 1838.

Suspension Bridge/today's North End

The city's North End was once the village of Suspension Bridge, and was also known as the Village of Bellevue. It incorporated in 1854 as the Village of Niagara City. By 1874 it was called simply Suspension Bridge. In 1892, it incorporated with the Village of Niagara Falls, creating the



City of Niagara Falls. It is here that the famous kite of Homan J. Walsh made its journey from Canada, paving with kite-string the path for the Suspension Bridge, which today is the site of the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge.

One-room schoolhouses stood near old the Suspension Bridge entrance; on Prospect Street near Niagara Street; and at Prospect at Falls Street, to name a few. In 1840, 180 area students attended classes.

City of Niagara Falls, New York

The merging of the two original villages, Suspension Bridge and the Village of Niagara Falls, on March 17, 1892 made the City of Niagara Falls, New York, with a population of about 11,000.

LaSalle

LaSalle was a hamlet, then a village. Parts of it were in the Town of Niagara. In LaSalle, a small red schoolhouse on the banks of Cayuga Creek opened its doors to a dozen children in 1868. LaSalle Village joined with the City of Niagara Falls on May 7, 1927.

Synopsis:

Formal education in Niagara Falls began before 1850. Prior to that year, several schoolhouses existed on various sites, including Second Street by the old New York Central Railroad tracks; near the old Suspension Bridge entrance; on Prospect Street near Niagara Street; and at Prospect Street and Falls Street.

In 1852, the original Third Street School welcomed 300 students. By 1855, 700 students needed an academic home and Third Street was enlarged accordingly. 1855 saw Fifth Street School appear, and in 1872, Cleveland Avenue School (Suspension Bridge) brought the number to three. In 1889, both new schools became high schools, operating as two parts of a whole, or two "divisions."

In 1895, Pine Avenue School students held classes as Sugar Street School was built, followed later by Whitney Avenue School, and the new Third Street School in 1897 and Center Avenue School in 1898.

The early 1900s saw a host of new schools cropping up: Ferry Avenue School in 1901; Ashland Avenue School and a new, central Niagara Falls High School in 1903; 13th Street and 22nd Street schools in 1907; McKoon Avenue School 1908; Tenth Street School in 1913, and 24th Street School in 1918.

In 1919, Niagara Street School was built large enough to accommodate 1215 students and was at the time the largest elementary school in the state outside New York City.

1922 brought North Junior High School, South Junior High School, and Maple Avenue School. In that year NFHS burned beyond saving, and a new NFHS was opened in 1924. Seventeenth Street School was opened in 1926.

1927 saw the addition of three LaSalle schools, Cayuga, Pacific, and Evershed, after the Village of Niagara Falls annexed that municipality. More schools were needed to provide for LaSalle area students, and so Hyde Park School was built in 1928. Gaskill Junior High School and Trott were built in 1929; LaSalle Junior-Senior High School in 1931. In 1931, the District had 17,000 students enrolled and schools were described as being in a state of "terrific over-crowding."

The post-World War II era saw the population of the LaSalle area explode and create increased demand for schools. The 1950s saw the construction of 79th and 93rd Street schools (1950), 39th Street School, 66th Street School, and 99th Street School (1955), LaSalle Senior High School (1957), and Beech Avenue School (Henry J. Kalfas Magnet Elementary School) and 95th Street School (Geraldine J. Mann Elementary School) in 1958.

The 1960s and 1970s added only 60th Street School (1962) and Harry F. Abate Elementary School (1972).

In 1976, 24th Street School ceased to be an elementary school and instead housed Community Education. The District bought the former Madonna High School from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo and opened Niagara Middle School in 1995. In 2000, both NFHS and LSHS were closed as the new \$83 million NFHS was opened.

In 2007, Niagara Middle School became Cataract Elementary School, the Board of Education Building on Walnut Avenue was vacated, and District Administration moved to the just-closed 66th Street Elementary School. The Community Education Center moved to the former 60th Street School. Niagara Street School was demolished and rebuilt as a state-of-the-art elementary school.

In 1960, Niagara Falls had 102,394 residents. In 1967, it was the six-largest city in the state. In more recent times, the population has steadily declined. By 2010, the city's residents numbered 50,193. Schools closed – some were sold, others demolished, some were consolidated.

Of the more than 40 schools or learning sites that ever served our community, today there remain 11, of which eight are elementary schools, serving grades Pre-Kindergarten to six: 79th Street School, Harry F. Abate School, Cataract Elementary School, Hyde Park School, Henry J. Kalfas School, Geraldine J. Mann School, Maple Avenue School, and Niagara Street School. There remain two prep schools: Gaskill Prep School and LaSalle Prep School. And there is one Niagara Falls High School, serving all students in the community in a state-of-the-art facility serving grades nine through 12.

There is one Community Education Center.

Third Street School

239 Third Street
1852-1962

In 1852 the first school of multiple classrooms was built for 300 students --the original Third St School, located at number 239. (Current site of the Seneca Niagara Hotel & Casino employee parking lot, Third & Rainbow Blvd.) It was to be the first of more than 40 neighborhood schools. It cost \$4000 to build, and owed its existence in large part to James F. Trott. It served all students in the village, and so marked the only time the school district was ever centralized, serving all students in one location.

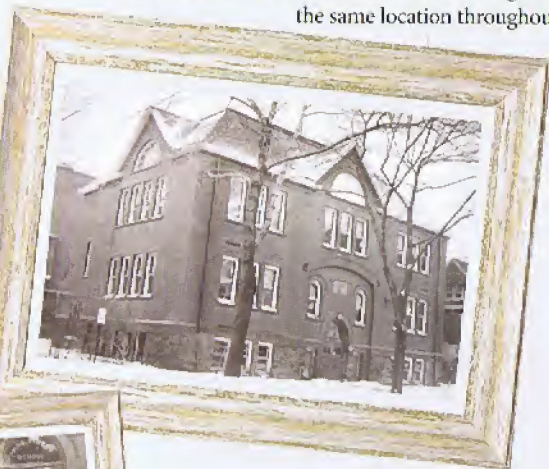
Third Street School also housed the public library in 1852, when the library's 502-volume collection was housed in a small room in the school.

By 1854, there were 700 students, so Third Street was enlarged at a cost of \$8000.

By 1896, the determination was made that the school could not be properly heated or ventilated. Thus in 1897, an entirely new structure replaced the original, and the original school bell was installed in the new building. Additions to the seven-classroom, two story school were made in 1927 and 1928.

In 1913, 33 taxpayers petitioned the Board not to build a playground around the school, though one can only guess why.

Over the years, as the business community expanded in the neighborhood, many residential homes were repurposed as tourist or rooming houses. By the early 1950s, transience was becoming a problem for the Third Street School, as business encroached on its area. In 1947, only two of the children in grade four had lived at the same address they had just four years before, and only seven students in the whole school had completed their time at Third Street School while living in the same location throughout.



Fewer single family homes meant lower enrollment, and by 1962 it was determined to close the school.

The first principal of the rebuilt school had been Eunice Shaw, the last John Taddeo.

In the 1970s, the building was used as administrative offices for Niagara County Community College, which was located in the former Shredded Wheat building.

The building was sold to Urban Renewal and was later demolished.

Fifth Street School

535 Fifth Street
1855-1972

Built in 1855 and located in the 500 block, Fifth Street School was constructed for a total cost (land, building, equipment) of \$101,429.17.

Located between Ferry and Walnut avenues on the east side of the street, it was three stories high and held 14 classrooms. The school was made in part of native gray sandstone, quarried from the Niagara Gorge between Devil's Hole and Lewiston. Fifth Street School was originally lit by candles and heated by stoves, with toilets located outside. It was expanded in 1888 and held primary grades on the first floor, intermediate grades on the second, and high school on the third. Steam heat was introduced at some point.

From 1884 to 1891, the principal of the school was Nathaniel L. Benham, later the first Superintendent of Schools for the incorporated city.

Fifth Street School welcomed a few displaced Third Street School students, while that school was being replaced with a larger version of itself in 1897-1898.

In 1889, Fifth Street School was renamed Niagara Falls Union School. In that year, seven young women comprised the first graduating high school class. In the early 1900s, the first Cadet Corps at Fifth Street School was formed from boys in grades three through five.

In 1889, Fifth & Cleveland became "two divisions" of the community's paired high schools. In 1892, the two consolidated.

In 1898, it was the site of the first kindergarten class in the community.

In 1900, it was the first school to have electric lighting.

In 1921, a report from the Stated Education Department stated:

"Two of these buildings, the Cleveland Avenue School and the Fifth Street School, should probably be abandoned. That is to say, as the local authorities develop a school building program to meet the needs



of the city for the next 15 or 20 years, it will doubtless be found wise and economical to abandon these buildings as soon as the development of the new building program makes adequate provision for the children of these centers."

Nonetheless, it goes on to state that:

"It has doubtless already been observed not only that the Fifth Street and the Cleveland Avenue schools (the two oldest buildings in the city) provide space for a large percent of the elementary school population, having over 26 percent of the registration as given by the principals in September 1918, but that these two buildings provide in large part the accommodations which the city offers for the educational program for the pupils of the seventh and eighth grades."

It may be that sanitary accommodations were part of the complaint, as the same report states that "in several buildings the toilet facilities are not adequate for the number of pupils registered." Other sources state that, in its earliest days, Fifth Street School featured not only outdoor toilets, but a bench and a pan of water to serve as washrooms.

The authors go on to admonish that "Clean, white, sanitary conveniences are most wholesome in their reaction on the moral development of the child."

The situation must have been resolved, because the school remained in use for 117 years, closing in 1972.

The building was demolished in 1976. The property on which it sat is located behind Carolyn's House.

Suspension Bridge Union School (Old Cleveland Avenue School)

*Lockport Avenue and Eleventh Street
1872-1923*

The original Suspension Bridge School was located at Lockport and Eleventh streets and served the community until 1923. At that time, the Erie Railroad right of way was run through the school property, and the building was turned over to the railroad and became its freight office.

The school moved to Cleveland Avenue and 13th Street, and was renamed Cleveland Avenue School, after the Falls and Suspension Bridge incorporated as one city in 1892.

The principal was Norman P. Browning, who had also served as head of the Suspension Bridge School system.

In 1889, Cleveland Avenue served as one half of a "two divisions" high school program, its partner being Fifth Street School.

It was, at various times, also used as a social and a recreational center, and was a hub of community life. Suspension Bridge, though, was a busy port, a bustling area, and increased population meant a larger school was needed.

A 1921 Report of the Survey of the Niagara Falls School System states:

"Of the thirteen elementary school buildings, the oldest is the Fifth Street building, erected in 1855.

The Cleveland Avenue School was erected in 1872, in the northern part of the city, then known as Suspension Bridge. Both buildings have been somewhat remodeled since the dates given but definite information as to exact time when changes were made is not available. These two buildings, one in Niagara Falls proper and the other in Suspension Bridge, apparently met the educational needs until after the two incorporated communities were united in 1893.

These buildings were doubtless located in or near what were probably the centers of population at that time."

"As is stated in the summary of the score of the Cleveland Avenue building, 'It is recommended that an enlargement of this site or a new site be secured and a modern building erected at the earliest opportunity as it seems probable that to make extensive repairs to this building so as to secure sufficient light, new floors, a sound roof and proper toilet accommodations, would cost so much that the results would not justify such outlay.'"

In 1924, the school was razed and a new school, also called Cleveland Avenue School, was constructed on the site. This school opened in September 1925; it was identical to Maple Avenue School. Much like the Pine Avenue Niagara Falls High School (today's Niagara Arts and Cultural Center) and South Junior, Cleveland Avenue School shared heat with North Junior High School. The passing of heated air under the ground between these schools helped keep the roads above clear of ice and snow.



In 1976, Cleveland Avenue School was closed after serving the community for 51 years. The last principal was Wilfred Young.

Pine Avenue School

*Pine Avenue and 16th Street
Pre-1895-1901*

Pine Avenue School was held in a building owned by one H. T. Allen, and was intended to relieve crowding at Fifth Street School. Located at the north-east corner of Pine Avenue and 16th Street, it was comprised of four classrooms, for which the Board paid rent. In 1895, the cost was \$720 a year.

In 1896, Pine Avenue School was itself crowded, and was receiving students both from Fifth Street and Cleveland Avenue schools, each of which was also bursting with enrolled pupils. In that year alone, 57 new students were studying in Pine Avenue School, which could not accommodate the ever-increasing volume of scholars.

But by 1897, Pine Avenue School was abandoned, and students were disbursed to Cleveland Avenue School regardless of its cramped conditions. The community recognized that two remaining schools were insufficient to handle the needs of



the community, and so a vote was held to construct a new school for the fourth ward.

Those entitled to vote on the construction included real estate holders, home owners, those with children in school, and those taxed upon \$50 worth of personal property.

The vote was favorable and Ferry Avenue School was built. It effectively replaced Pine Avenue School and was opened in 1901.



Sugar Street School

Hyde Park & D Street
1895-1959

H yde Park in Niagara Falls is the largest city park in the state, Central Park excepted. But long before Hyde Park, the street that shares the name of Charles B. Hyde, owner of a paper company, was known as Sugar Street, so called because of the sugar that spilled on the street while in transit from the boats of the upper river to the area of the lower river.

Built in 1895, Sugar Street School occupied the lot on the corner of Hyde Park Boulevard and D Street. It was the first school built after the incorporation of Niagara Falls in 1892. A three-story brick structure, it contained eight classrooms.

Parents saved the building in 1948, at which time the Board of Education felt it was unsafe and planned to close it. Public pressure convinced the Board to remodel the school, and so they did, eliminating its signature, twin, 82-foot towers and installing an oil-burning furnace. The school continued to serve the Echo-ta section of the community until 1959 when it was declared a fire hazard. Upon returning from Christmas break, students were sent to neighboring schools to complete the academic year.

The first principal of the school had been Katharine Hanrahan, the last John Taddeo. The building was sold to Armand Cerrone in 1960.



The entire staff list of Sugar Street School the year before it closed consisted of:

Rita Moretti, principal
Lucille Rosatone, Kindergarten
Sandra Kivowitz, First Grade
Celia Chakos, First and Second Grades
Gertrud Krutenat, Second Grade
Rosemarie Chiodo, Third Grade
Cecilia Carrier, Third and Fourth Grades
Jean Behen, Fourth Grade
Ernest Roundtree, Custodian.

The school in that year had an enrollment of 177 students.

Whitney Avenue School

Whitney Avenue and 18th Street
1897-1938

Named for General Parkhurst Whitney, a village founder and owner of the Cataract House and the Eagle Tavern.

L ocated at Whitney Avenue and 18th Street, Whitney Avenue School was built in response to the growth of the population and resulting need for more school sites. Opened in 1897, the school was of simple architectural design.

Board of Education minutes of September 24, 1897 include a report from the Teachers' Committee, in which that body states:

"The Whitney Avenue School opened with so large an attendance that it has become necessary to open two additional rooms in the building formerly rented from Mr. H. T. Allen on Pine Avenue."

It goes on to request the hiring of two additional teachers.

In use as a school for only 40 years, it was closed as the population declined and shifted. The first principal had been Norma E. Osgood; the last Mary D. Hiller.

Immediately subsequent to its closure, though, it was dedicated as Youth Training Center of National Youth Administration, a New Deal agency that sought to train and educate workers between the ages of 16-25; it operated as part of the Works Progress Administration from 1935-1939.

At the dedication, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Taylor said,

"Now there are three factors that make up any good school. There is the equipment and a building, there is the instructional or teaching and leadership staff, and then there is, more important than all of these, the student body."

He went on to say that, though the first two elements may be in place, "you will still have a bad situation if the group who are to participate are not actuated by the desire to profit from their opportunities. We all hope and have every reason to expect that you young people will make the most out of this opportunity."

In later years, the building was used for storage. In 1946, it opened for adult education classes. It suffered a fire in 1950, which partially destroyed the structure, but it was rebuilt in 1952, owing to a bequest of \$30,000, known as the William Wallace and Clara Greenly Kincaid Education Fund. In 1976, it was sold for \$42,210 and converted to apartments. The property changed hands several times and, sadly, suffered another fire in 2007. It was eventually sold for \$1 to new owners, but in the end, ownership reverted to the city, which took it over in rem.

In 2014, after years of remaining vacant, the building was torn down by the city.



Center Avenue School

Center and Highland avenues
1898-1968

The beautiful two-story brick school with 16 classrooms at Center and Highland avenues opened in 1898. The local paper on October 3 of that year called the school a "handsome" and "elegant" structure in the fourth ward that would fill "a long-felt want." Its roof was distinctive; the architect was W.H. Orchard. Mary Shellington was appointed principal to oversee five teachers and 200 students.

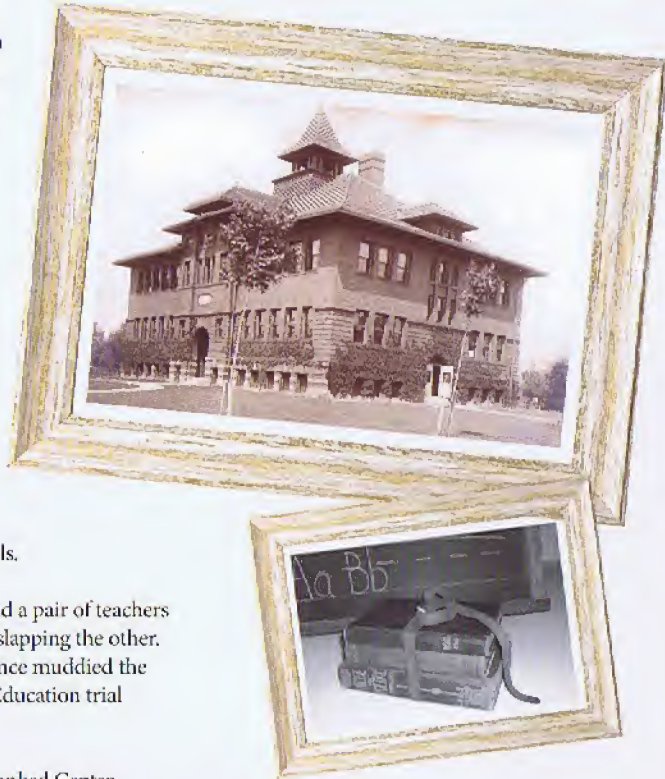
The opening coincided with the Compulsory Education Law taking effect, and one Samuel Eshelman was appointed Truant Officer for the schools, all of which anticipated an increase in enrollment. Prior to the law, enrollment for all students was about 2600 pupils.

In 1939, drama swirled around a pair of teachers at the school, one accused of slapping the other. The suggestion of jilted romance muddled the proceedings of the Board of Education trial for misconduct.

In 1965, Janet Brundage, 6, thanked Center Avenue School Safety Patrol Capt. John Ewing, 12, who pulled her from the path of a truck.

Ewing was honored at a school assembly, presented with a letter of commendation from the Chief of Police, and received a letter of commendation from Superintendent Weldon R. Oliver.

In the late 1960s, Center Avenue School became a causality of desegregation efforts. The student body at that time was 99% black, and desegregation saw those students bussed to six schools with predominantly white student bodies, four of the schools in LaSalle.



The last principal was James Showers.

The school was sold and used as a community center called Friendship House.

1902 - 1922

Ferry Avenue School

1605 Ferry Avenue
1902-1980

Ferry Avenue School was dedicated on January 10, 1902. Located still at 1605 Ferry Avenue, it replaced Pine Avenue School and served students for 78 years. A study of historical references to the school serves as a reminder of how immigration and other historical events impacted the community.

A 1921 report by the State Education Department describes the student body at that time as being primarily children of Italian and Polish families. Indeed, a report in the Niagara Falls Gazette of Wednesday, April 5, 1904 stated:

"The Ferry Avenue School has a greater percentage of the foreign element registered than has any other school in the city. The work done by the children of foreign parentage was very much in evidence at yesterday's exhibition and it showed a remarkable degree of aptness on their part."

As in any school, Ferry Avenue School students passed around colds and coughs, and media stories in 1913 record that the school was closed for at least a week in April of that year due to an outbreak of scarlet fever. Like other cities, Niagara Falls had "pestilence houses" or "pest houses" in which to quarantine the ill. One was located just outside Oakwood Cemetery; another was opened at Porter Road and 29th Street. The city had about 23 cases of scarlet fever at that time, most of which were in the vicinity of Ferry Avenue School. Janitors scrubbed benches and furnishings and then fumigated. The school reopened.

In 1914, the city experienced a serious outbreak of small pox, exacerbated by the fact that

Niagara Falls was one of only three communities in the state that did not require immunization against it. Despite the contagion, many people were distrustful of the shot, and opted not to get it. In February of 1914, the Board of Education resolved to deny attendance to any student who had not been immunized or had already had small pox; at least one employer, Shredded Wheat, also announced that no one who had not been immunized would be hired.

The situation quickly resolved itself. Life resumed its normal cadence.

Additions to Ferry Avenue School were built in 1925 and 1961, the latter at the request of parents who wanted a gymnasium.

The first principal at the school was Catherine C. Martin, the last Harry Bouchard.

Ferry Avenue School was closed in 1980 and sold to Niagara Falls Neighborhood Housing Services in 1987. It is today the Joseph S. Presti Sr. Apartment Complex.



Ashland Avenue School

719 Ashland Avenue
1903-1972

According to the compilation School Bells Ring by Patricia Wilson Rice, this school was designed by E.E. Joralemon, the same individual who designed the Earl Brydges Public Library. Ashland Avenue School was erected on the site of a vineyard with plums and apple orchards. Rice also tells us that the first Special Education class was begun at Ashland Avenue.

It was not the only first the school would usher in. The Niagara Falls Gazette dated November 21, 1952 states that the Board of Education undertook a program to relight all city schools, and that they started with Ashland Avenue. The relighting program was piloted at the school after District personnel undertook a study that had been completed in an experimental lighting institute in Cleveland, Ohio. However, that institute was conducted by General Electric Company, and some were skeptical.

"There is no final authority in lighting," protested one Arthur Silberberg, who made the trip to Cleveland. "Persons selling fixtures have prejudices. There is no one to whom a school board can turn who will tell you all the answers. There are many angles to the whole thing."

Studies on the matter included frosted versus non-frosted bulbs, light or dark green versus black chalkboards and the color of desks and other furnishings.

Media reports of the day seem contradictory with respect to the first principal, with the following obituary run in 1921:

"Sarah B. Smith
Thirty years is a long time to serve the city as a public school teacher. Such was practically the record of Sarah B. Smith, principal of the Ashland Avenue School, who died yesterday. Smith was recognized as one of the most able among the



entire list of teachers in the city. She has always held positions that called for a display of exceptional talent and her outstanding qualifications as

a teacher won for her the position of head of the Ashland Avenue School when that building was opened. Her service has been faithful and of unusually high order. She will be greatly missed by teachers and pupils."

Smith is also listed as principal in Buffalo Courier 1913. However, newspaper accounts of 1903 clearly record the appointment of Helen L. Prime as first principal in that year.

Ashland Avenue School is the stuff of fond memories for resident and former Board of Education President Bob Kazeangin:

"We had second and third grade classes and fourth and fifth grade classes together. What an amazing concept, as this allowed the brighter student who was in the lower grade to excel and move into the upper grade work without having to leave his or her friends or class.

My fondest memory was being able to ring the school bell in the morning. Our custodian, Mr. Hill, would select a student to pull that big rope in order to ring the bell. How proud you were when selected by Mr. Hill!

Once a week we would walk to the public library which was housed next door at the Carnegie Building. What an outstanding library that was. It has an amazing glass floor to take you to the third level where the reference books were kept. It was always a treat to take our once a week trip there."

The school was closed in 1972, but the building was not. It became an office building, housing Center City Neighborhood Development, the APA Employment Agency, and Cubello Real Estate. Later the American Red Cross occupied the first floor and Healthy Heart Program of Niagara County occupied the second. In 2002, the Niagara Wellness Council and Opportunities Unlimited had quarters there. From 2005 to the present it has been the Refuge Temple of Christ.

Niagara Falls High School

1201 Pine Avenue
1903-2000

Niagara Falls High School

4455 Porter Road
2000 - present

The history of public high schools in Niagara Falls is one that encompasses five schools and seven buildings including the Niagara Falls High School we have today.

In the earliest years, Fifth Street School provided high school education in the village of Niagara Falls, while Cleveland Avenue School did so for Suspension Village. After incorporation as a city, then-Superintendent of Schools Nathaniel L. Benham favored one, centralized high school to serve all students. This idea was determined to be the most financially sound, best able to accommodate the population, and provide the same educational quality to all high school students. This would be the same reasoning by which a later Superintendent, Carmen A. Grant, would promote the idea of returning to the concept of one, unified high school in the next century.

In 1901, residents voted to spend \$150,000 to build a new school on property located at the corner of Pine Avenue and Portage Road, which was purchased for \$26,000 from Augustus Porter. In 1903, under Superintendent of Schools Reuben Taylor, the first Niagara Falls High School was opened. A parade of officials and students marched from the Armory on Main Street into the new school and held opening celebrations.

A 1921 report from the State Education Department describes:
"In the same year (1903) the present high school building was erected. It is probably one of the first high school buildings of its type, square, with class rooms, recitation rooms, lecture



rooms, and laboratories on the outside and with auditorium and gymnasium in the rear center.

The grounds are unusually spacious and attractively laid out. It is undoubtedly an excellent building for its purpose and compares very favorably with high school buildings of that period."

Sadly, in January of 1922, during construction of an annex to the building, which was planned to provide vocational classrooms, a fire broke out and destroyed the building.

Discovered at 4:45 p.m. on January 24, the blaze burned through the night and caused damages totaling \$650,000.

At that same time, construction of the new Maple Avenue School had just been completed, and freshmen were sent there for classes. North Junior High School and South Junior High School were just being completed, so sophomores, juniors, and seniors attended classes there.

By January 1923, the annex at Pine Avenue and Portage Road was completed and juniors and seniors were able to study there. The ruins of the high school were razed, and the construction of a new high school on the site began.

In 1924, much to the relief of the displaced high school student body, classes resumed on Pine Avenue. The new Niagara Falls High School opened with 72 classrooms and all the modern conveniences.

Neoclassical revivalist in style, the 166,000 sq. ft. building was lauded as one of the state's best-designed schools, the result of an architectural collaboration between William B. Ittner of St. Louis and Simon Larke and C.F. Obenhack of Architectural Associates. In 1937, there was a movement to name the school after a popular editor of the Niagara Falls Gazette, N. Frank Maddover. Maddover, however, discouraged the movement in print, and so it was dropped.

The cornerstone of the new edifice, laid July 24, 1923, held the contents of a 1902 time capsule in it, but in every other respect it was a thoroughly modern achievement.

Thirty-five-year Board of Education member and Everett C. Dyer Award honoree Don J. King recalled his time as a student in Niagara Falls High School, at a time when sororities and fraternities as well as "High Y" groups (formed around the YWCA/YMCA) formed part of the social fabric of student life.

King, a member of Gamma Sigma, laughed to recall the occasion of Balfour Jewelry coming to show class rings to the students, only to find some of them went missing.

"The principal called us in the morning and told us to get the fraternities together; we had until lunch to get those rings back where they belonged. And we did; the fraternities were able to get them returned."

Former Superintendent of Schools Cynthia Bianco began her career at this school, and recalls how times were changing.

"I remember well my first year as a teacher at NFHS. Fresh out of college, this 22-year-old had no idea that this was the start of a 50-year career.

What I recall most was that I was just four, and sometimes, three years older than my students! I was also the youngest teacher in the school, something which the students, and most certainly my fellow teachers, weren't used to. I was often asked to follow directives given to students, given by those who thought I was a student. I was also one of the first staff members to wear slacks to work, the results of which was that I often received an ice cold stare from the female principal...although she said nary a word about it. I was also one of the few staff members to work at the school while pregnant. You see, high school teachers were primarily more senior in age. Somehow I survived it all, as seemingly did my fellow staff members and students. It was a culture-changing and wonderful experience!"



By 1989, the only two high schools remaining in the city were NFHS and LaSalle Senior High School, Trott having been closed in 1988. The Pine Avenue building, though, needed much repair. There was a concern, too, that the only other remaining high school in the city, LaSalle Senior High School, was a far more modern school, which offered students there a more pleasant environment.

The population by now having dwindled significantly from the heyday of the World War I era, the socio-economic realities of the city

tended to create a more affluent student body in LaSalle than in downtown Niagara Falls. The Board of Education and Superintendent Carmen Grant undertook a study of the possibilities of building one, state-of-the-art high school and closing both the existing NFHS and LSHS. The goal was to achieve equity by providing a superior educational facility to all students.

But it took more than desire to accomplish the goal. The community had to be persuaded, as did the student body and the staff. And there was the question of money. Grant took a non-traditional path to accomplish what would otherwise have been impossible. He established a public-private partnership that allowed the District to lease the high school building for \$5 million a year for 30 years. Of that \$5 million, 83 percent is reimbursed by New York State as part of the state's building aid system. The District pays about \$700,000 a year to rent the facility, which was originally funded when Honeywell Inc. raised money on Wall Street and put up cash so the District could lease the building without increasing in taxes.

With exemptions from state laws, Honeywell was able to build the school for less than it would have cost the school district under traditional means.

A 2001 article by Kate Zernike in the New York Times explained the mechanics simply:

"Honeywell agreed to build the new school and lease it back to the district. The company would not pay for the school, however. It issued

certificates of participation, which are similar to government bonds, and sold them on the private market through J. P. Morgan, using connections no school district would have.

The district had to seek exemptions from the Legislature on several state laws: it was allowed to build the school without choosing the lowest bidder; it was allowed to issue the certificates, and perhaps most important, the district did not have to build according to the Wicks Law, which requires at least four contractors for any public works project. To win labor leaders' support for that exemption, Honeywell used only union labor."

Winning hearts and minds was accomplished on the local level. One strategy that paid dividends was the creation of "The Power of One," a group made up of students from the Pine Avenue NFHS and LaSalle Senior High School. These students worked together to represent their respective

schools and help two student bodies meld into one. The group met with administration, contributed opinions, and eventually acted as student ambassadors to the community when the new school opened.

The resulting \$83 million Niagara Falls High School opened in 2000 with a Broadway-quality theater, a television studio, two gyms, a running

track, and an almost Olympic-sized pool. The terrazzo-floored interior design is based on the artwork of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian. The student body chose the high school mascot, a wolverine named Spike. In 2015, the District completed \$17.5 million athletic complex encompassing 6.5 acres behind Niagara Falls High School and composed of synthetic turf, a 1,500-seat football field, pairs of baseball and softball

diamonds and three fields used for soccer and lacrosse. The District also renovated Nicoletti Field, built a 13,000-square-foot field house with fitness facilities and areas for wrestling and weightlifting, and provided additional updates to the track, bleachers, scoreboard, and press box.

The project accounted for nearly one-third of the District's 2012 \$66.7 million "Inventing Tomorrow" capital project. The overarching goal of the project was to provide District students with facilities on par with or better than those of surrounding, more affluent districts.

The other major improvement to the existing school was the construction of two state-of-the-art Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) labs. The two labs, the Bio-Science/Math Interaction Lab and the Applied Math/Bio Innovations Lab provide outstanding opportunities for students to study neuroscience including focus on addiction and concussions, infectious diseases, cancer, the human genome, statistical analysis, computer design, product-based engineering, bio-manufacturing, pre-engineering, engineering, advanced manufacturing, and nanotechnology.

Students have an opportunity to work with 3D scanners and printers, CNC routers, and laser cutters to create both physical and virtual manipulatives, while studying forces in motion, medical advancements, sustainability, technology, and software.

Although its parent schools will always have a special place in the hearts of all who attended them, today's Niagara Falls High School is

beloved by its student body and is the envy of high school students in other municipalities.



Coached by Niagara Falls City School District Hall of Famer and Greater Buffalo Sports Hall of Famer Dan Bazzani, the 2004 - 2005 Section VI Class AA State Champions: James Bennett, #32, Kendall Davis, #15, Tyrell Douglass, #33, Jonathan Flynn #3, Greg Gamble #34, Robert Garrison #23, Paul Harris # 11, Ray Iveys #21, Tyrell Lynch # 35, Anthony Marshall # 31, Andrew Mills # 22, Marcel Respress # 12, Miguel Respress #25, James Starks #24. Assistant coaches: Sal Constantino, Bob Stone. Junior Varsity Coach Brent Gadacz; Modified Coaches: Dan Venuto, Mike Esposito, Giulio Colangelo



Thirteenth Street School

347 13th Street
1907-1968

Built in 1907 and expanded in 1917, this school had its highest enrollment of 657 students in 1929, so great was the increase in industry and population. But by 1947, only 279 students were enrolled there; 193 students were estimated to be lost through urban renewal, or what was distastefully called "slum clearance." Thus the remaining neighborhood was insufficient to populate a school.

In addition, the neighborhood became more and more commercial. In 1968 the Board of Education closed the school. The fate of the school building was in flux all the time. In 1962, the Board voted to let NIACAP have it; in 1969, they voted to lease some of its rooms to the Niagara County Association for Retarded Children and the Cerebral Palsy Association.

The building, vacated of actual school children, did play a central role in a District drama that unfolded in 1968. Members of the Board and at least some staff — including District Reading Director Marion Hughes — wanted to convert 13th Street School into a reading center. Such an arrangement was even part of a grant application seeking \$300,000 under the Educational Personnel Development Act. Superintendent Weldon Oliver opposed the idea vehemently, even stating in one Board meeting that there was no way he would recommend it. A disagreement in his office between him and Hughes finally triggered Hughes to turn in her resignation — the second time she had done so in two years. Oliver then went to Albany to visit family, without advising the Board of the resignation. Hughes went home with "nervous exhaustion" and anticipated being hospitalized, so stressed was she at the turn of events.

Oliver was seen by some as foiling Hughes' efforts to improve student scores. But Oliver contended that establishing the reading center



at Beech Avenue School would help integrate that school, which at the time was more than 90% minority. Board member Matt Buchalski backed Hughes, saying there would far more room at 13th Street to provide a fuller array of reading support services to students and professional development to teachers.

In the end, the center was established at Beech Avenue School, with partitions in an all-purpose room to create centers to offer these services. And in what can only be construed as a final insult, a closet at the school was converted into an office for the reading director.

A Department of Education Directory from 1968-1969 does not show Hughes as an employee, so presumably, she passed on the closet space.

The City purchased the property in 1976 and eventually demolished almost all of it; the gymnasium was used for a time as a recreation center.

The school was almost identical in construction to 22nd Street School and was designed by architect James R. White.

H. May Brown was the first principal of the 11 classroom school. The last principal was Rudolph Marion.

Twenty-second Street School

22nd Between Cleveland and Niagara
1907-1972

Nearly identical to 13th Street School and built the same year, 22nd Street School experienced a similar life cycle to its twin. Opened with 143 students, enrollment bulged to 623 in 1920. An annex was built to add three rooms, but when Hyde Park School opened, enrollment decreased.

In 1961, the school's Parent Education Group (PEG) presented the school with a new flag, designed by student Qary Speirqn.

In 1966, the school's PEG held an Arts and Crafts Festival and awarded first prize in the Art category to student Wendy Molyneaux.

In 1969, the PEG wrote the Board a letter in support of sex education.

In 1968, the school figured into a turbulent time in race relations, when 31 children were transferred to 22nd Street School from Cleveland Avenue School. The student body of 22nd Street was all white; the black community felt that the Board was achieving integration by bussing black children to white schools, but not transferring any white children. Noted community resident the late Rev. Glenn Raybon led the fight—and a boycott—of the schools. According to the Niagara Falls Gazette published September 11, 1968:

"The Rev. Mr. Raybon said that portable classrooms were purchased last year for Cleveland Avenue and Maple Avenue Schools so that white pupils in overcrowded classrooms would not have to be transferred to neighboring Center Avenue School, which at the time was 98 per cent Negro."

The decision to send the 31 black children to previously all-white 22nd Street School, Rev. Raybon charged, was "made by the administration and Board of Education how they wanted and when they wanted."

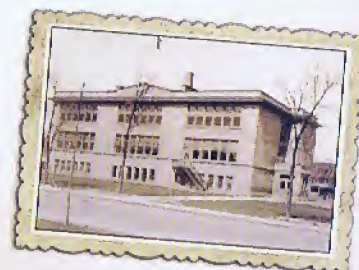
"It's time that we started haying some things we want and when we want them," he charged. "I don't want those children in 22nd Street School, I want them in Cleveland Avenue School, just because you parents (of the students in question) want them in Cleveland Avenue School."

This is a bit of the chapter in the story on integration, covered elsewhere in this book. Suffice it to say, 22nd Street School played a role in that story.

The writing seemed to be on the wall for 22nd Street School by 1962, when the Board of Education refused to build an annex to the school for a gymnasium and auditorium. Proponents of the idea pointed out that other schools — like Ferry Avenue and 24th Street School — had had similar plans approved subsequent to the 22nd Street School request. But already it was apparent to the majority of the Board that 22nd Street School's days were numbered. An assessment of the building's physical plant yielded the recommendation that the building be abandoned; its enrollment area was redrawn and reduced.

The school closed in 1972, and was sold to Zoog, Inc. and demolished.

The architect was James R. White.



McKoon Avenue School (Original Maple Avenue School)

Maple Avenue and Whitney Street
1908-1922

Classes have been held in DeVeaux since September 1899, when Judge J.D. McKoon rented the first floor of his home to the Board of Education so that classes could be held there. In that brick-veneered building, one large room held the class taught by Ellen N. Brown. A 1906 list of teaching staff lists the teacher as Nellie B. Flynn, with two substitutes, Margaret Caher and Sara Johnston. The Board approved a salary of \$550 for that year.

In June of that year, the Board of Education voted to purchase a site to erect a school in the DeVeaux area, and considered moving the Third Street Annex to this yet to be acquired site.

In 1908, a school was built at the northwest corner of Maple and McKoon Avenue (then called Whitney Street), and students were educated in that location instead. The first principal at this first Maple Avenue School was Lottie A. Myers, the last Sara Woods Johnston.

By 1922, the population was growing sufficiently that a new, larger school was erected at 952 Maple Avenue, where it still stands today, educating students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to six.



Cayuga Drive School (Niagara No. 4)

706 Cayuga Drive
1909-1976

Pacific Avenue School (Niagara No. 5)

7116 Buffalo Avenue
1909-1973



Cayuga Drive School

Both built in 1909, Cayuga Drive School and Pacific Avenue School -- along with all other LaSalle schools -- became part of the Niagara Falls School District in 1927 when the two municipalities merged. Prior to that, they were part of Districts No. 4 and 5, respectively, when LaSalle was still part of the Town of Niagara.

Cayuga Drive School was in the midst of adding an addition when the merger took place, which increased the school from eight to 14 classrooms and added a large gymnasium. It also benefitted from the installation of a modern heating and ventilation system, and lighting system, as did Pacific Avenue School and Evershed School.

At the conclusion of these capital projects, each LaSalle school had a flagpole and a bell.

Pacific Avenue was a two-story brick building, had 18 classrooms, and many additions to accommodate the growing population of the area.

At least twice between 1962 and 1969, the Board of Education considered closing both schools and moving students to 66th, 79th, and 93rd street schools. Parents at the LaSalle schools were vehemently opposed to the proposed redistribution of students, and wanted a new elementary school built behind LaSalle Junior High School or on 80th Street, so that children would not walk to schools on the opposite side of the Expressway.

Expressway concerns notwithstanding, in 1973 Pacific Avenue School was closed and in 1976, Cayuga Drive School met the same fate.



Cayuga Drive Students

Pacific Avenue School, complete with school bell, was converted to a restaurant, Tammany Hall, by Carl Pasquantino. In March 1977, fire destroyed the building.

Cayuga Drive School was sold to a developer. According to Norma Higgs' Niagara Gazette column of August 19, 2013:

"The school was closed in 1976 and sold to a developer for \$14,000. It was demolished and replaced by private residential building lots currently occupied by single-family housing. The original Niagara No. 4 was moved from that site back in 1909 and is still located on 88th Street and Mang Avenue."

Evershed School

209 57th Street
1910-1962

Built in 1910 to serve what was then known as the Evershed section of LaSalle, Evershed School was named for Thomas Evershed, an engineer who proposed harnessing the power of the Niagara River by using hydraulic canals and who, in 1881, was nominated to be State Engineer. His plan called for canals to power factories that would discharge used water into a series of tunnels located beneath each site. His thinking helped — eventually and indirectly — lead to the idea of developing one power station and using water to produce electricity. His work was integral to fashioning the electric power produced today by the waters moving from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario.

By 1955, Evershed School had become crowded, even while serving students only in grades Kindergarten to three. (It could comfortably accommodate 233 students). Students in grades four to six were attending 66th Street School. In 1958 the Board of Education presented a referendum to the public to build a new school at 60th and Kies Street. It was defeated by an almost 3-2 margin.

Parents and the Board continued to sound the alarm about the problem of seriously overcrowded schools, but in 1959, the Board opted not to go back to the public with the referendum, preventing the construction of 60th Street School and postponing proposed additions to Beech Avenue School. Administrators were starting to warn of double and triple sessions to accommodate students, and/or the possibility of transporting students across town to Niagara Street School.



In 1960, a group of parents and teachers from Evershed and 66th Street schools again went to the Board and requested a new school at 60th & Kies. They pointed out that schools' capacities were 230 and 600 respectively,

but enrollment was 239 and 743. They cited estimates that soon 1300 students would need to fit in the two schools.

In May 1961, the Board found a way around a referendum, and voted to sell a \$2.7 million bond issue at an interest rate of 2.5% to cover the cost to build the school, build additions to Niagara Falls High School and Ferry Avenue School, and other projects. The school board had the right to float a ten-year bond at its own discretion without needing voter approval. Thus in August, 1961, ground was finally broken to build the new school.

Despite the request of Evershed teachers for the Board to name John Taddeo, Evershed Principal, the principal of the new 60th Street School, Helen Kowalski received that appointment.

Evershed was closed when 60th Street School was opened in the fall of 1962, and sold for \$3,600 to Niagara Steel Sales. Sixtieth Street School remained in use as an elementary school until 2007. Today, it is the site of the Community Education Center.



Tenth Street School

Tenth Street and Ferry Avenue
1914-1972

This two-story brick building was built in all haste, with just a bit more than nine months from groundbreaking to opening in September 1914. It was the first school in the city to have a swimming pool and showers.

The Niagara Falls Gazette of February 1, 1930 published an essay crafted by Ruth Witmer, who had attended Tenth Street School the preceding year. Her essay won third place in a state-wide contest and she returned to the school to share it with the Junior Safety Council. Entitled "My Duty as a Junior Citizen to Observe Traffic Rules," it provides a reminder that life was changing dramatically in these times. It is excerpted here:

"In many progressive towns of the United States, there are traffic signals at every corner. There are policemen where they are needed, and in the schools the pupils practice safety. Similar conditions are found all over the United States.

"Twenty years ago, there were no automobiles or electric street cars. Therefore, there was little need for traffic rules. But now the streets are full of automobiles, and to prevent accidents, traffic rules are necessary."

One employee who worked as a custodian at Tenth Street School gained 15 minutes of fame when his hobby was celebrated in the Niagara Falls Gazette of September 19, 1955. Joe Paradiso began collecting the buttons

he found sweeping the floors, and eventually amassed more than 50,000 of them, which he formed into a 9' by 6' display at the school. The paper reported that his wife was not anxious for him to retire, bringing the buttons home with him.

Tenth Street School served the community for 58 years, closing in 1972. It was sold to Forrester Development and served as a medical office building. Currently, it houses a day care program.



Twenty-fourth Street School

Between Forest and Independence avenues

1918-1976

Twenty-fourth Street School was opened in 1918 in response to the growing population of Niagara Falls. An elementary school, it was quite modern at the time and featured a swimming pool and locker rooms. A grandstand was added to the property in 1925 and remained for 30 years before being removed. An auditorium/gymnasium was added in 1960.

The first principal appointed to the new school was Leslie R. Dona from Olean.

In 1921, thieves entered the school, absconding with three footballs and two basketballs.

In 1955, parents from Packard Court complained that there was no transportation for Kindergarten students in their neighborhood.

In 1960, parents from 24th Street School fought hard to get the gymnasium and auditorium added to the school. It was voted down in a referendum in 1959 and came before the Board in 1960. With a third of the Board in opposition, a resolution was passed to float a 10-year, \$450,000 bond issue to do this work and some other.

Board Member Dr. Robert P. Brezing, in voting against the bond issue, pointed out that the 24th Street School addition was rejected

by the voters previously. "Now," he said, "we're shoving it down their throats."

Two other members felt such additions should apply to Ferry Avenue and Twenty-second Street schools as well or none of the schools at all.

Nonetheless, the work was completed.

The baseball diamond at 24th Street School was, for many years, the most popular such site in the city.



Twenty-fourth Street School remained in use as an elementary school until 1976 and was subsequently used for adult education. In later years, it was sold to Niagara County Headstart.

Niagara Street School:

A Tale of Reinvention

2513 Niagara Street

1919-present

Since 1919 Niagara Street School has stood sentinel over its neighborhood. It has undergone many changes in its nearly 100-year history.

The first part of its story is reprinted here, taken from Patricia Wilson Rice's *School Bells Ring*:

"A significant increase in population after World War I forced the immediate construction of more schools on the East side. With the erection of Niagara Street School in 1919, Niagara Falls had the honor of having the largest elementary school in the state outside of New York City. Today the school is the second largest elementary facility in the Niagara Falls School District.

James H. Erwin was appointed the first principal.

By 1929 it became necessary to construct an addition to Niagara Street School. When the renovation began in June 1986, the building was a K-6 elementary school with an enrollment of 710 children. The structure is actually two connected three-story buildings, one erected in 1919 and one in 1929. The building comprises 1 3/4 acres in an urban, residential area.

To facilitate this renovation project, all of the children, teachers, materials, desks, furniture, etc., were moved from Niagara Street School in June 1986 to be temporarily housed at the vacant South Junior High School for the entire school year 1986-1987.

Though that renovation addressed both the interior and exterior of the building and was vast by any measure, by 2005, it was determined that the structure simply no longer met the needs of the modern student body. A study undertaken by the

District revealed it would cost about \$14 million to bring the 1919/1929 structure up to compliance. There were major concerns like out-of-date electrical and heating systems and a lack of handicapped-accessible areas.

A \$50 million referendum passed in December of 2004 allowed for a host of updates District-wide as well as the construction of a 78,000-square foot new Niagara Street School. It was determined that building on the existing site would help stabilize the neighborhood, by that time suffering from the economic downturns that confronted the whole area in the wake of the loss of industries and jobs. The old structure and its handsome woodwork and casework were replaced by brightly colored, terrazzo-floored spaces with a contemporary feel. During construction, students were relocated to vacant schools owned by St. Stanislaus and St. Joseph churches.

The state-of-the-art school consists of two main parts -- a three-story instructional wing and a two-story "commons" wing which house the gymnasium, auditorium and other non-instructional areas. The school was opened August 29, 2007 with an official ceremony and neighborhood picnic. It remains an elementary schools with one of the largest student bodies.



1922 - 1931

Maple Avenue School

952 Maple Avenue
1922-present

Built in 1922, Maple Avenue School retains the charm of an old-fashioned school, with its park-like landscape and bell tower situated in a neighborhood of old, large homes. And it has indeed seen much history and many people in its long life.

The school's first principal, Sara Woods Johnston, taught at Ferry Avenue School from 1906 to 1918, at which time she transferred to the original Maple Avenue School as a grade six teacher and supervising principal. When the current school was built, she was made principal, a post she held until her sudden death in 1952.

In addition to her job duties, she was a charter member and board member of the Niagara Falls YWCA, a member of the Board of Directors of the Family and Children's Society, and was active in establishing scout troops for boys and for girls. She was also active in her church. She died after a brief illness in her house at number 4009 Barton Street, to the great surprise of all.

During World War II, Maple was just one of the schools prepared to open a casualty station to host doctors, nurses, and dentists in the event of an emergency caused directly or indirectly by the war.

In 1953, one of its students lost his legs when a freight train ran over him; a benefit was held at nearby St. Theresa.

In 1956, the ceiling above the swimming pool caved in, but fortunately no one was in the building at the time.

According to the Niagara Falls Gazette of June 29, 1961, just two days before the Board was set to approve a contract for security with the William J. Burns International Detective Agency, two members of staff opened Maple Avenue School to clean and found it had been severely vandalized. They discovered 61 broken windows, two emptied fire extinguishers, phones, pictures, and a bust of Abe Lincoln smashed. The mess was throughout the school.

In 1967, Maple got the District's first portable classrooms, as the school was overflowing with



students, in part due to integration reconfiguration.

In 1971, one of Maple's parents, Gail Stone, launched an educational campaign against pollution. The former member of the Women's Air Force shared infor-

mation at the Parent Education Group.

In 1972, Barbara Lee won the spelling contest.

District Human Resources Administrator and attorney Maria Massaro said her time as a student at Maple Avenue was formative.

"I was part of Eugene Candy's grade five and six informal class, which was located in the detached portables. Such freedom for 9, 10 and 11-year-olds! Mr. Candy was a fantastic teacher. The classrooms were on their own, just the teacher and students and a water cooler.

"How grown up and independent we felt being allowed to walk from the portable into the 'big school' by ourselves!

It was in Mr. Candy's class that I learned the finer points of Roberts Rules of Order, as he operated a club in the class each year."

Teacher Amy Chiarella recalls being in school as the Blizzard of '77 approached.

"I was in grade one, Mrs. Wright's class; there were only six or seven of us who had come to school that day. The principal came in before lunch and told us we were being sent home and that we should not play or dawdle but to get right home and stay inside."

Home is where students would stay for several days thereafter, hunkered down like all of Western New York that auspicious winter.

Maple recently received a new playground and has been enlarged, but it retains the feeling of an old school and its picturesque beauty on its sprawling green carpet on the corner in DeVeaux.

North Junior High School

*Cleveland Avenue and 15th Street
1923-1982*

South Junior High School

*Portage Road between Ferry and
Walnut avenues 1923-1987*

Burgeoning population after World War I resulted in the need to reassess the community's educational needs. A recommendation from the State Education Department called for the construction of junior high schools to house grades seven, eight, and nine. The plan was to provide both traditional instructional space and space to teach the industrial arts: science in labs, woodworking, mechanical drawing, print making, and home economics courses like sewing and cooking.



Thus by 1922, both North Junior High School and South Junior High School were under construction. The model for intermediate education was progressive and Niagara Falls gained national attention for its forward-thinking ideas. People visited the schools throughout the 20s and 30s to see the educational model in action.

North Junior was located at Cleveland and Fifteenth streets. Initially, it took in the student body of the Old Cleveland Avenue Elementary School, while that structure was being demolished and replaced. By 1925, it took up its original charge of being a true junior high school.

South Junior High School was located on Portage Road between Ferry and Walnut

avenues and opened in 1923, but it, too, was pressed immediately into service for purposes other than those intended. When Niagara Falls High School burned beyond reclamation, South Junior welcomed displaced juniors and seniors, in addition to students in grades seven and eight. By 1924, NFHS was rebuilt and open, and South Junior was relieved of its guests.

SJHS shared heating pipes with NFHS; they ran under the ground between the two buildings—one on Pine, the other on Portage. NJHS shared heat with Cleveland Avenue School.

South Junior outlived its twin by a few years; North Junior was closed in 1982, South Junior in 1985. But South Junior was again able to welcome displaced students, as it served as a temporary home for Niagara Street School students in 1986-1987 school year, during which time the elementary school was undergoing extensive renovation. Thereafter, it housed the Community Education Center, until that program moved to 60th Street in 2007.

North Junior was sold to MAC Associates in 1989.

The Creed of North Junior High School
As reprinted in the Argus

We, the students of North Junior High School, believe in honesty, sincerity, and the square deal. We believe that hard work and honest sport will give us a sane mind and healthy body. We believe in loyalty to God, to our country, and to our school.

South Junior was sold to CB Emanuel in 2015. Today, it is the site of Niagara City Lofts.



Seventeenth Street School

*Between Ashland and Elmwood avenues
1926-1973*

Built in 1926, 17th Street School was constructed to serve the area north of Pine Avenue. In 1928, it was the site of an experimental and forward-looking enterprise in teaching methodology.

The reasons for the change will sound very familiar to those who follow education today. A Niagara Falls Gazette article published on February 1 of that year said:

"For some time leading educators have felt there was something wrong with the methods of education in practice. More rigid college entrance requirements have shown them the need for a more intensive education in the public schools."

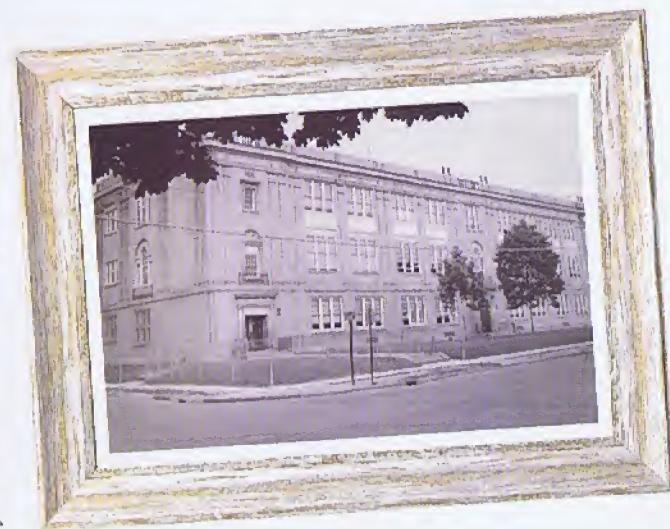
It goes on to say that, under the direction of Supervisor of Preliminary Education Amelia Wensel, children in three, grade one classrooms experienced a new way of teaching and learning, one which focused on allowing children to follow their own curiosity. Formal tables and chairs were done away with and informality ruled the school day. Students might work on the floor or be grouped into three subsets according to interest or mastery of the material, so the teacher could circulate among the groups, challenging some, encouraging others.

"Of course, there are regular classes in the three Rs, but even in that, the child's initiative is employed to a large extent." Students were allowed to make group decisions, correct one another's academic errors, and engage in different

— if related — activities at the same time. The model was praised for teaching children to be organized, self-directed, and to work collaboratively. The teachers at the school agreed this method was far more work for them, but preferred it, as they saw greater gains in student achievement.

The school's Principal, Virgil J. Ullman, praised the initiative.

"It is the best means of building character that I have seen. I think it one of the best innovations in teaching methods we have had in a long time."



The methods of the little red schoolhouse, the paper said, had been discarded.

The 22-classroom school continued to serve until 1973, by which time declining population had rendered it superfluous.

The building was used by the Niagara Community Action Program for some time thereafter, and was later demolished. In 1987, the property was sold to United Cerebral Palsy Association.

Hyde Park Elementary School

1620 Hyde Park Boulevard.

1928-present

Since 1928, Hyde Park Elementary School has stood opposite the city's beautiful park by the same name. Singular among the schools in its architectural detail, the school features sculptured animals on its bannisters by noted sculptor Mary Pierce Langs, hand-painted tiles from Spain around the water fountains, and ornamental motifs bordering the school's main entrance. The architects of this building were Simon and Russel Larke.

One of the most dramatic moments in Hyde Park's history occurred in January, 1958, when a tank car traveling the Niagara Junction Railway and carrying 10,000 gallons of lacquer solvent from Peoria, Illinois exploded, shaking the city. One early radio report mistakenly identified the site of the blast as Hyde Park School, causing some parents to arrive in a very upset state seeking to learn the welfare of their children.

The 700 students, however, were all fine, although plenty of windows were broken by the blast. Subsequent letters to the editor of the Niagara Falls Gazette complimented teachers and staff for keeping children safe and calm.

In 1959 parent John Chioda appeared at a Board requesting students be allowed to have lunch at school; the Board tabled a resolution to reaffirm its lunch policy, presumably one that required students to go home for lunch.

In April 1961, more than 120 members of the Parent Group turned up for free polio immunizations at the school. Pat Mardon went first in getting her shot from Dr. Anthony Bax.

Hyde Park School was named after Charles B. Hyde, owner of a paper company that operated on what was then Sugar Street. His wife willed the land to the city where now stands the park itself. He died in 1921, just several years before the school was built.

Today, 470 children attend the school.



Charles B. Gaskill Prep School

910 Hyde Park Boulevard

1929 - present

Charles B. Gaskill, veteran of the Civil War, who enlisted as a private and came out as a colonel, is remembered as the organizer and first commander of the Old Forty-Second Company of the New York Guard. With this Company, he served in the Spanish-American War. In addition, he was a businessperson of multitudinous interests, issuing a newspaper, building a flour mill, a pulp mill, and helping to organize the Niagara Falls Power Company. He also served as president of the Village of Niagara Falls and served on the Board of Education.

Charles Gaskill is credited with proposing a pension system for Niagara Falls teachers.

Built in 1929 as a junior high school, Gaskill school has been in continuous service ever since, as a junior high (grades 7, 8, 9), middle school (grades 6, 7, 8), and currently as a prep school (grades 7 and 8).

A Niagara Falls Gazette report of a 25-year anniversary celebration held at the school in 1956 recalled the tribute paid in 1946 to a retiring employee, vice principal Rosalie Martin. It recalled "Miss Martin's Day," November 20, 1946, when Patsy DeBiase, once the student council president and at that time a major in the U.S. Air Force, had returned to the school to attend the special day and speak about Martin.

The article quotes the school yearbook, the Dial, as having offered this:

"Among those who have gone from us and whom we cannot forget was our beloved vice principal, Miss Rosalie Martin, who retired after 50 years of devoted service in the city schools. Her warm smile and sympathetic manner wielded a great influence in the lives of hundreds of children."

Gaskill shares a history very much in common with its cousin, LaSalle Prep School. The schools were opened only two years apart and both remained open after the 2007 reconfiguration of the District called Facing the Future. In that year, Niagara Middle School, the third middle school at the time, was closed, with Gaskill and LaSalle absorbing its grade seven and eight students. Grade six was returned to elementary school and thus the prep school model was adopted.



Niagara Middle School became Cataract Elementary School; Gaskill Prep School and LaSalle Prep School continue to serve students today.

Gaskill contains one of the most beautiful rooms in the District: its library. With its church-like windows looking out over Hyde Park, this room is beloved of all who attended the school.

One resident, Sandi Watson Guidotti, recalled a particularly poignant moment she experienced in the Gaskill Library.

"I was in the library at Gaskill on the day JFK was assassinated. I remember sitting there and suddenly the principal announced over the loud speaker system that our president had been assassinated. Many of us were crying. We were told school was letting out early and to go home. I remember being in shock. In those days the news wasn't like it is now. I remember going home and crying. My Mom was home and we sat and watched Walter Cronkite on TV. Very, very sad."

Tammy Wable-Santos recalls being in school at Gaskill as the Blizzard of '77 approached. She didn't immediately grasp the significance of what was about to happen.

"Gaskill had students released early that day. Walking home with clear skies and sunshine, I was thinking 'Ha! I got a day out of school!' I didn't have a clue to what was coming later!"

Gaskill Prep School, named after a man who played a significant role in history, has seen much of it, and will continue to serve into the future.

Trott Vocational High School

11th Street between Ashland
and Elmwood avenues
1929-1988

Opened in 1929, Trott Vocational High School, named after James Fullerton Trott, was hailed by many as heralding a new age of education. Providing education to traditional students and adults alike, the school, located on Eleventh Street between Ashland and Elmwood avenues, had 43 classrooms in which to teach vocational education: the skilled trades, nursing, drafting, cosmetology, and more.

At the opening ceremony, Dr. Lewis A. Wilson, Assistant Commissioner, Vocational Education, said:

"The secondary schools for nearly 100 years were primarily concerned with the education of the more fortunate who planned to enter college. Very little was done to organize courses for the 90 percent of the children who never went to college. Today, we are interested in the development of an educational program organized to meet the social needs of the community."

An editorial in the Niagara Falls Gazette in June of that year extolled the virtue of the new educational model:

"Thirty-five boys were graduated from Trott Vocational School last evening. It was the first class to receive diplomas in the new institution. It is doubtful whether the community really appreciates the significance of that event.

These young men are pioneers in a policy of education that is new not only in Niagara Falls, but throughout the country, a policy that would make of education a useful, practical thing.

The demand of industry is for trained operatives more than ever before. In fact, there is little room in industry today for the technically untrained man or woman."

After WWII, Trott was a blessing to many a returning veteran, as the third floor was turned over to them entirely. Here vets from 18 to 30 years-of-age could enter at any time and take accelerated classes, easing their re-entry into civilian work life. Veterans

from the Falls, Lewiston, Lockport, Wilson, Ransomville, and North Tonawanda took advantage of the opportunity, including one of the few, if not the only, woman to do so, Jennie Lucci, formerly of the Women's Army Corps.

A Niagara Falls Gazette article published April 18, 1946 celebrated lifelong learning in a story about 84-year-old Charles M. Richardson, then of 1606 Eighth Street, who enrolled in Trott Vocational to learn welding, with an eye to opening a repair shop.

"A machinist who came out of retirement to work at the S. M. Ryder company in order to aid the war effort, Mr. Richardson had plans to open a small business in the Finger Lakes upon completing his training at Trott."

In 1988, the Board of Education closed Trott, feeling that the facilities were no longer up to date, and that vocational needs were better served by BOCES and, at the time, LaSalle Senior High School. For a while, the building was used as a satellite of Niagara County Community College; today it houses public services like the Department of Motors Vehicles and the Parole Board.

The first principal of Trott Vocational was Harmon L. Gregory. The last was Frank Orfano.

"Trott Vocational High School gave me and many others of my generation an opportunity to fulfill the American dream. As tradesmen, auto mechanics, nurses, and cosmetologists, we were able to enter the workforce at an early age. By the age of 25, the skills that we learned at Trott made it possible for many of us to become well established into the middle class."

Vince Anello - Former Mayor, City of Niagara Falls

The final Trott yearbook, the Trottarian, includes the last will and testament of the class, a traditional item in yearbooks of that era. It includes: "To the Junior Class - no Trott."



1931 - 1962

LaSalle Prep School LaSalle Junior-Senior High School

7436 Buffalo Avenue
1931 – present

One of the loveliest schools in the city, the light-colored, three-story brick school sits back on its lot with a vast expanse of green lawn in front of it. The steps to the main office form a wide, stately approach. The interior features natural light and an auditorium with adjective motifs, as elegant today as they were when the school opened in 1931.

Built to accommodate the increasing number of students living in the LaSalle area in the heyday of the city, the school was opened as a Junior-Senior High School. No more did LaSalle area students have to graduate from Niagara Falls High School; in 1935, a class of 65 became graduates of LaSalle Junior - Senior High School.

The school continued as a junior-senior high school until 1957, by which time it was necessary to open a new LaSalle Senior High School on Military Road. The Buffalo Avenue school became a junior high school.

In 2007, the District embarked on a restructuring plan called Facing the Future. It called, among other things, for the return of grade six to elementary schools and the creation of prep schools for grades seven and eight. This was designed primarily to improve continuity of instruction and increase academic performance of grade six students, while allowing the District to better utilize its resources by eliminating a middle school and adding elementary school. So in 2007, 7436 Buffalo Ave. became LaSalle Prep School, one of two in the city.

The school changed over time, and so did the students and the nation.

In 1972, principal Harold D. Jamieson instituted a progressive elective course on current American culture. Taught by two young teachers—one liberal, one conservative—the course discussed controversial issues like the Vietnam war, race relations, drugs, and hippy culture.

In 1940, the Ongiara, the yearbook of the Junior - Senior High School recorded how a stadium came to be at the location:

"In 1934 the Board of Education authorized the construction of an athletic stadium at LaSalle High School as a W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) project.

A deficiency in funds caused work to be suspended in 1936, and building operations on the project were not resumed until a year later. At last the stadium was completed in 1938.

The first football game of the 1939 season between LaSalle and Niagara Falls was chosen as fitting for the dedicatory ceremonies. The grandstand and bleachers were filled with spectators in expectation of the event, but inclement weather caused a postponement of the ceremonies.

The formal dedication took place on October 14, 1939 when LaSalle played its second home game of the season against Kenmore."

That field was renewed in 2016, when the Board of Education built a field house and provided synthetic turf for the field.

Yearbooks from the 1940s give a glimpse of this schools—and the community's—experience during world war years, as they list by branch the alumni who were serving the country.

The 1940 Ongiara includes a pre-war poem by Class Poet Elaine Baumann, an homage to a country many would be called on to defend:

Youth Looks at America

America, thy youth has faith that here
Ideals and dreams need not give place to fear.
Each man unto himself is sovereign,
Bound only by the rights of other men;
The right of each to act as he deems best,
To work, to plan, to live and laugh and jest;
The right of all to know and speak the truth.
What wonder would these bring to eyes of youth
In lands where dreams are bartered for the sword
And hatred in the hearts of men is stored!

America, youth sees that thou art fair,
And eagerly he now prepares
to share
In working to
preserve thee
as thou art,
A land with
dreams, a nation
with a heart.



Seventy-ninth Street School

551 79th Street
1950-present

Ninety-third Street School

1101 93rd. Street
1950-1980

Built in time for the 1950- 1951 academic year, the two identical elementary schools were constructed to serve 644 and 758 students respectively.

Seventy-ninth Street School was bordered to the north by Lindbergh Avenue, on the east by 80th Street, and on the south by Girard. It was heated by oil.

Ninety-third Street School was bordered on the north by Cayuga Creek, by vacant property on the east, and by Griffon Manor housing project on the south. It was heated by coal.

Both were constructed to address the growth in population in the LaSalle area, and each contained a library with a full time librarian – a first for elementary schools and a fact that bolstered the Falls' District's reputation as a leader in the State.

Apparently, the avant-garde was all the rage in the area; the Niagara Falls Gazette published in May of 1971 carried this caption to a photo describing an experiment at 93rd Street School:

"OH RATS - Paul Snider's class at 93rd Street School is learning about the care and feeding of rats this month as part of a study of nutrition. The kids are finding that adding milk to a rat's diet makes him grow. Here, practice teacher Cathleen Blood, at left, helps Patricia Winker handle one of the experiment rodents and Carmen Cianchetti, right, weighs another one while Mr. Snider looks on."

Sadly, 93rd Street School became part of the tragic legacy of Love Canal. The Auburn NY Citizen Advertiser published in 1978 stated that:

"NIAGARA FALLS, NY—Low level radiation has been detected in an area about five blocks from the Love Canal site here. Dr. Robert Whalen



-- the state's Health Commissioner -- said Saturday. Whalen said the low level radiation was found near the 93rd Street School, but that it did not present an "immediate health hazard."

At that time, investigators speculated that the radiation may have come from uranium tailings dumped in the Niagara Falls area during the Manhattan Project.

In 1980, the school was closed due to concerns about contamination from the site. The story, of course, was followed world-wide. The Palladium Times, Oswego, carried this item on its front page on August 31, 1979.

"NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. (AP) — The Niagara Falls Board of Education has voted unanimously to close a second school because of chemical contamination from the Love Canal.

One year ago this month, the 99th Street School, built on fill directly over the canal, was closed and turned into a command headquarters in the state's \$22 million cleanup.

The board, meeting in extraordinary session Thursday night, decided students at the 93rd Street School six blocks away also might be harmed by the percolating chemicals buried in the canal by the Hooker Chemicals & Plastics Corp. over a 10-year span ending in 1953."

Seventy-ninth Street School has enjoyed a much more fortunate tenure in the community, and is still the academic home to about 500 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to six. The playground was completely renovated in 2017, much to the delight of students, who cut the ribbon on June 2. Seventy-ninth Street even has a school song, written by Teresa H. LaGamba.

Ours to remember year after year
Kindness and guidance from teachers who are
near Ours to remember, a new found friend
Never forgotten when school days end.

We strive each day for learning
With guidance at each turning
Eyes and hearts and hands reach
high above
For the glory of the school that
we love
Seventy-ninth Street School!

Thirty-ninth Street School

39th Street between Walnut
and Ferry avenues
1955-1982

In June of 1961, grade three students at Thirty-ninth Street School met Canadian pen pals with whom they had been corresponding and rode the Maid of Mist on a joint field trip.

There weren't too many years in which to make memories at Thirty-ninth Street School, which served the community for just 27 years.

Opened on February 14, 1955, the smell of new materials hadn't yet dissipated when it was learned the new \$811,000 school lay in the path of a proposed power canal.

Thirty-ninth Street, 66th Street, and 99th Street schools each opened on that St. Valentine's Day, but all save one was doomed; only 66th Street would still be welcoming children a short 30 years later.

Each had been built to alleviate the crowded conditions and double class sessions which were then the norm in elementary schools. Thirty-ninth Street sat between Walnut and Ferry avenues, a tan brick structure merely 810 feet long.

Thanks to the efforts of the Board of Education and the Parent Group who protested the proposed canal, the school received a temporary reprieve. But the school was doomed nonetheless.

Still, many current residents have fond memories. Karen (Conti) Serrienne shared these memories:

"We lived kitty-corner from the school; my mother watched out the window for my brother and me as we walked to school. At that time, Victoria Polley was principal, and Ginger Nowak was her secretary. My mother was friends with both of them.

At the end of each school year, classes were divided into four color groups, and you were placed on a team with all the other students in the



school with that same color. There were obstacle courses of sorts, ranging from 100 yard dashes, running around the school, things like that.

Since the school didn't have a swimming pool, at the end of the year we were allowed to go to 60th Street School for a day of swimming. I loved that.

My all-time favorite teacher in my life was Rose Brown -- she was tremendous.

Winifred House was another favorite of mine. The year I had her, she had a class field trip to Fort Niagara at the end of the year. I had perfect attendance until then, when I got the chicken pox. I can still remember being extremely upset about it. She felt so bad that she invited me and my cousin to her house in the summer to go swimming in her pool and spend the day with her. I feel so lucky to have had the great teachers I had at 39th Street School!

When my mother saw them tearing the school down, she went over and asked for three bricks from the school. The workers gave them to her and she had small engraved gold plates put on it saying "39th St. School" and the years it was open. She gave one to each of my brothers and me."

"This was a very loving school," said another resident, Lawrence Smith, recalling his days there. "We had everything at that school."

Sixty-sixth Street School

630 66th Street
1955-2007

In a frame tucked away in one of the offices at the Administration Building on 66th Street is a child's painting of an angry face and the finger-painted words "we all hate your idea."

Such was the sentiment among many attending a meeting of the parent group of Sixty-sixth Street School and the Board of Education in 2006. The topic? Whether to close 66th Street School and relocate within it the Administrative Offices of the school district.

Part of Facing the Future (see also the pages on Cataract Elementary School), the closing of 66th Street School was one outcome of the plan to reallocate resources to better and more economically serve students. But that did not matter to the school community.

Sixty-sixth Street School was opened February 14, 1955, along with 39th Street and 99th Street schools.

The fates of the other two schools being what they were, 66th Street School out-lived its siblings as an elementary school by 25 years. It was always a well-loved school, and students and staff observed the anniversary of its opening each year. On the 10-year anniversary, it was feted at the Red Coach Inn. On its 25th, it was celebrated at the Ramada Inn. It was named a Blue Ribbon School under No Child Left Behind and was popular with parents and students alike.

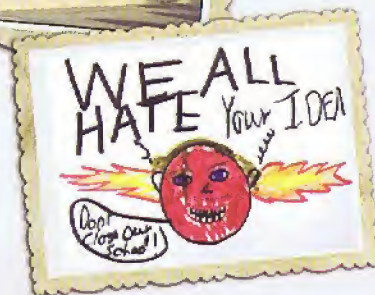
Nonetheless, the Administration Building at 607 Walnut Ave. was in need of serious repair, and the decision to move grade six back to elementa-

ry schools was reconfiguring almost every school in the District. Niagara Middle School was being recreated as Cataract Elementary right next door, and was able to welcome students from both 66th Street and 60th Street schools; 60th Street School was also being closed as an elementary to become the Community Education Center.

In 2007, the former 66th Street School welcomed not only the administrative offices of the District, but administrative annex, maintenance and warehouse staff as well. This enabled the District to divest itself of 607 Walnut Avenue, close the Elmwood Avenue maintenance site and the warehouse on Sixth Street, saving taxpayers considerable sums.

The former administration building has been developed by Housing Visions and will open as Walnut Avenue Homes.

The former annex has been developed by the Niagara Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) to house vocational programming.



Ninety-ninth Street School

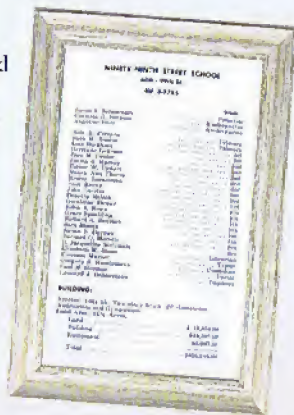
600 99th Street
1955-1978

Ninety-ninth Street School opened with its siblings, 66th Street and 39th Street schools, on St. Valentine's Day 1955. The school had a brief and tragic tenure in the community, and pages elsewhere in this book have been devoted to that (see Love Canal). For current consideration, we turn to other events.

In 1957, approximately 40 parents attended a Board meeting to protest a plan to transfer 128 students from 99th Street School to a school outside the LaSalle area to relieve over-crowding. Ninety-fifth Street School had not yet opened to accommodate the great numbers of LaSalle children. A petition signed by 108 parents was presented.

One school being considered to help out by accepting some students was Niagara Street School. Parents at 99th Street complained that they didn't want their children in "that neighborhood." Given the full history of 99th Street School, one may reflect on that attitude in one's leisure.

In 1961, the Parent Association held a 'punch party' for two retiring teachers, Gisella Keller and Lillian Viner.



In 1962, parents successfully petitioned for a playground at the school. To finance it, the Board sold a plot of its 99th Street land to one Ralph Capone. The land was sold with the condition that the buyer assumed responsibility for the industrial waste that it contained.

In March 1967, 99th Street School was the victim of profanity-loving vandals who spray painted obscenities on walls and started small fires in the school. It was the sixth forced entry into the building in the preceding seven months, and was not alone; LaSalle Senior High School was also experiencing this problem. Damage was pegged at \$18.

One popular employee at the school was custodian John Streb. Said one former student, "He was one of the nicest men I ever met."

In 1971, the parent group held a dinner to say farewell to outgoing Principal John Pattist and welcome new Principal Rudolph Marion. Marion was the last principal of 99th Street School. Only several years later, the school would be close and razed in the wake of the Love Canal disaster.

LaSalle Senior High School

Military Road
1957-2000

Few things are as painful to a community as the closing of a school, church, or community organization that has been held dear by many people for a long time. In the history of Niagara Falls, many schools have closed, but in recent times it is LaSalle Senior High School that seems to be the most grieved for, and closing it was a difficult decision.

Opened in 1957, this 72-classroom school on Military Road was constructed for \$4 million. It had a beautiful courtyard, encased by four main buildings; it featured natural light, a beautiful auditorium, and, eventually, a field house. An addition in 1970 added 11 classrooms, a library, clinic, guidance office, and space for shop classes.

Norma Higgs writes, in the September 23, 2013 Niagara Gazette:

"The 'A' building housed the home economics, sciences, mathematics and commercial classes. The 'C' building was where the academic courses were held and where the school library was. There were many windows in this building to utilize the natural light of the sun to the fullest. The auditorium had the latest acoustical features and seats for 1,378. It was located on the north side of the quadrangle and contained the only decorative work in the school design. There were beautiful, colored, mosaic tiles with interspersed stonework, making a grand front entrance. There was a football field and softball diamonds on the 50-acre plot on Military Road near Pine within the city limits. Elton C. Schwinger was the first principal of the new high school."

The opening of LSHS relieved pressure on the classrooms at NFHS and saved busing costs. An \$8 million addition in 1988 allowed LSHS to welcome the automotive, carpentry, electronics, machinery, and welding programs which had been offered, up until then, at Trott Vocational. When Trott was closed, practical



nursing, cosmetology, and drafting programs were moved to NFHS on Pine Avenue; LSHS welcomed the rest.

The Explorers and the Niagara Falls High School Powercats enjoyed a vigorous rivalry and the consensus was that never again the twain should meet. But times change.

In the end of the last century, when considering the planning of one high school, the superintendent and Board of Education saw clearly that maintaining two high schools was not cost-effective. LSHS could not accommodate all District high school students. The situation as it was had LaSalle students in a superior academic setting, and building a new school and not including LaSalle students would simply reverse the problem.

By the time the current NFHS opened on Porter Road in 2000, steps had been taken to assure a peaceful unification of the two schools. The Power of One, a group comprised of students from each high school, had been meeting for many months. They made recommendations, served as ambassadors at their respective schools, and when the new school opened, served as tour guides and student representatives to the interested public. Among the responsibilities of the Power of One was to work for an enthusiastic consolidation of the student bodies; this they achieved.

But although current students are happy to be Wolverines, there remains in the community a loyal diaspora of Explorers and Powercats, as well as Trott Engineers. Each group has its own social media pages, reunions, and loyalties to the schools from which they graduated.

In the 1957 Ongiara, we find the Alma Mater:

LaSalle Alma Mater,
Your praises we're singing
Our song to thee we raise
It reaches the sky.
We honor thy teaching
Thy aims we are reaching
Our lives bear the imprint
Of the years we spent with thee.
We'll never dishonor
Thy name nor thy banner
LaSalle Alma Mater
Loyal we'll ever be.

Henry J. Kalfas Beech Avenue School

1800 Beech Avenue
1958- present

When Beech Avenue School opened in 1958, it was one of two hastily constructed new learning facilities, the other being 95th Street School (Geraldine J. Mann Elementary School). Speed notwithstanding, the design of the school by the architectural firm of Sargent, Webster, Crenshaw, and Folley was so well received that it was selected by the U.S. Office of Education to be displayed at the International School Building Exposition in Geneva, Switzerland.

Beech was filled to capacity immediately in the fast-growing city. By 1959, propositions were made to add eight more classrooms. By 1960 the school, built for 360 students, was housing 434, and the additional classrooms were built.

The first principal was Henry J. Kalfas, after whom the school is now named. (See also Integration.)

This school, which has been a magnet school since 1990, has frequently been the first to pilot programs in the District. In 1966, Helen Schoning, principal and former District-wide reading consultant, received permission to conduct an experiment in an attempt to address the fact that her research showed 80% of students with reading problems were male. She posited that part of the problem might have been the fact that elementary education was heavily feminized: female teachers, female-written textbooks, and so on. She received permission to divide grade one students into three classes: one all male, one all-female, and one with both genders. The all-male class would learn to read with words thought at the time to be more in line with male interests, words like "baseball" or "truck." No word on the experiment's results, but presumably, it didn't make much difference. After all, plenty of women play baseball and drive trucks. In any event, it was conceded even



in 1966 that most boys who were slow to master reading caught up with their peers eventually.

Beech Avenue School was the focal point of desegregation efforts, and, in the fullness of time, was considered to be very successful in achieving integration. Nonetheless, Beech Avenue School was boycotted for two days by black parents of Center Court in the late 60s, who were angry that busing practices, and future proposals for busing, seemed only to include busing black students, not white students.

In 1978, Beech Avenue School was rededicated as the Henry J. Kalfas School, in honor of the former Superintendent. In 2015, as part of the District's Inventing Tomorrow capital projects, it received new classrooms, a STEM classroom, and a new kitchen. The projects also replaced portable classrooms that had been in use for years.



Geraldine J. Mann Elementary School/95th Street School

1330 95th Street
1958-present

Ninety-fifth Street School opened in 1958 to welcome school children in a fast-growing area of the city.

In that year, the District had an annual budget of \$9,888,797 of which \$5,434,717.95 was to be raised by local taxes. Geraldine Mann was then Director of Elementary Education. At that time, the District employed dental hygiene teachers, nurse teachers, and an adult driver education teacher. Henry Kalfas was president of his union, the Niagara Falls Teachers Association. William J. Small was Superintendent of Schools.

In 1959, wedding banns were published for Joan Jarlenski, teacher at 79th Street School, and Eugene Candy, teacher at 95th Street School.

In 1960, a tea was held at the school to honor retiring teacher Hazel Treichler, who started working for the District in 1913. During her 43 year-career she taught at many schools, but her last years were spent teaching special education classes at the 95th Street School.

In 1961, two student members of the Young Americans Club at the school addressed City Council.

In 1965, Ronald Greenberg received his Eagle Scout rank at the school.

In 1996, Dr. Rita Moretti, principal of 95th Street School, a former teacher of Native American children, was among those ceremonially adopted into the Beaver Clan at a ceremony held by the Tuscarora. She was named "Bright Star" or UNah-See-Rawh-Nat.

In 1969, then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller visited the school. Principal Moretti speculated that the school was chosen either because it was the best in the city or closest to the airport.

In 1970, teachers here and across the city went on strike.

Geraldine Mann, assistant superintendent of elementary education, died in December of 1980; the school was rededicated in her honor just five months later.

In 2013, GJ Mann School, like all District schools, received a new STEM classroom. Today, the school has an enrollment of 476 students.



1962 - 1995

Sixtieth Street School

6040 Lindbergh Avenue
1962-2007

Sixtieth Street School, at the corner of 60th Street and Kies Avenue, was opened in 1962 to replace Evershed School. It was built after being rejected by voters in a referendum, thanks to an alternative method of engaging in capital projects. (See also Evershed School.) Parents at Evershed and 66th Street schools were adamant that a new school be constructed, because both existing schools were over-crowded. Helen Kowalski served as the new school's first principal.

The 18 classrooms featured functional design in the typical architecture of the day; long gone were the more opulent constructions of an earlier era.

In 2007, as part of Facing the Future—the District's reconfiguration of schools—60th Street School closed as an elementary school and re-opened as the Community Education Center (CEC). Part of the hope was that, by placing the CEC nearer the middle of the city, more people would avail themselves of its programs. Today, the CEC offers GED, adult education, and English As A Second Language classes. It also houses District records.

Within the records room, among shelves of student files that, by law, must be kept long after the subjects graduate, there still exists a room slightly larger than a closet, with padding on the walls, a drain in the floor, and a door with a large glass window extending nearly the length of the door itself. It silently bears witness to a time when classroom discipline was unenlightened and special education needs were poorly understood.

Here would students be effectively caged, well within the sight, but out of reach, of their peers for offenses likely behavioral in nature. It seems probable, in considering the issue today, that students so dealt with would today be classified as in need of Special Education services or psychiatric intervention of some type. Niagara Falls was not unique in handling the situation thusly; it was common practice and considered to be in the student's best interest.

District Coordinator for the Committee on Special Education Ken Krieger explains.

"It sounds appalling today, but back in the day it was considered a safe place to put kids who were emotionally disturbed or likely to hurt themselves or others."

Practices have evolved as certain disabilities have become better understood.

Sixtieth Street School is remembered as

a compassionate and happy place, as evidenced by grade four student Thomas Anger in 1970, who was quoted in the Niagara Falls Gazette as saying, "I wish everyone could feel as happy as I do on Christmas day."

The last principal of Sixtieth Street School was Manning Fogan.



Harry F. Abate School

1625 Lockport Street
1972-present

When Harry F. Abate Elementary School opened in 1972, it was to be a hub of educational innovation. Prescribed curriculum and daily lesson plans were to give way to open learning spaces, where more than 1200 students would each pursue his or her own interests, guided -- but not directed -- by a teacher.

The \$4.8 million investment in the North End was the Board of Education's largest since it built LaSalle Senior High School in 1956 and the first built in the downtown area in more than 65 years. Based on British schools of the time, each child would be free to wander from area to area, here learning math, here learning science, as the mood struck. Such open classrooms were not unique to this school. Others were tried in Philadelphia, New York City, and, closer to home, at Lewiston-Porter's Creek Road School.

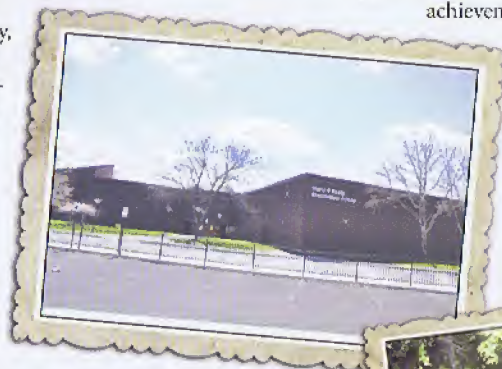
There was great enthusiasm at the time for the methods, and interested teachers volunteered to be considered for positions in the new school. Principal John Pattist came from 99th Street School to lead the school.

There was talk at the time of a bridge or tunnel to connect the school to the Earl Brydges Library, which opened the same year. The two facilities share 20 acres. This new age of education marked the end for Fifth Street, 10th Street, 22nd Street, and

Ashland Avenue schools, whose student bodies would merge to form Abate. The new school was planned to also address racial imbalance, as the large student body was drawn from diverse areas to study together.

The school is named after the late Deputy Superintendent of Schools, who, among others things, helped guide the District through integration. Today, Abate is one of the largest elementary schools in the city, and houses the enrichment program. It still enjoys a partnership with the library. The school underwent renovation to its forum in 2015.

Says current Principal Cynthia Jones, "The culture at Harry F. Abate Elementary School has developed over the years to one of solidarity, high expectations, and optimism. As a school in "good standing," every year our school community becomes more unified and perseveres in the pursuit of high academic achievement. Harry F. Abate Elementary School truly is a great place to learn and grow."



1995 - Present

Niagara Middle School

6431 Girard Avenue

1995 - 2007

Acquired from the Diocese of Buffalo (see Cataract Elementary School), Niagara Middle School opened in 1995.

Serving students in grades six, seven, and eight, it was the smallest of the District's three middle schools and housed the accelerated program. In 2007, it was recognized for meeting the criteria as high-performing, gap-closing school under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The school was praised by parents for having a wonderful atmosphere.

Existing as a middle school for only 12 years, it has the shortest tenure of any city school, but of course, the building itself is an ant: small and highly adaptable. It has been a high school, middle school, and elementary school in its day; both Catholic and public, and beloved by all who studied there. It is air-conditioned, contained on a single floor, and features a central courtyard.

There was much sadness when the school closed at the end of the 2006 - 2007 academic year, but by September it was open again to the delight of elementary students.

The last principal was Maria Chille-Zafuto, who was also the first principal of Cataract Elementary School, which currently occupies the site.



Cataract Elementary School

6431 Girard Avenue

(Niagara Middle School
(1995-2007)/Madonna
High School)

2007- present

Originally built by the Catholic Diocese as Madonna Diocesan High School, the building housing Cataract Elementary School has been reinvented a few times. First an all-girls, Catholic high school, then home to Niagara Middle School, it began serving elementary students in 2007.

After the closing of St. Mary's High School in 1959, Madonna High School welcomed its first students. In 1975, Madonna and Bishop Duffy high schools consolidated at the latter's location, forming Niagara Catholic High School. The Board of Education acquired the building on 66th and Girard in 1995, and opened it as Niagara Middle School. It would remain a middle school until 2007, when the District made several changes to better serve students and to save costs.

Facing the Future

In that year, the Board of Education accepted a recommended plan from then-Superintendent Carmen Grant called "Facing the Future," which was aimed at reconfiguring the District in light of decreasing population and greater academic needs. Part of the plan called for moving grade six from middle school to elementary school, retaining the mostly 11-and 12-year-old students with younger grades. This changed the basic educational model at the next level from middle school to prep school, housing grades seven and eight.



The District closed 60th Street and 66th Street elementary schools, and converted Niagara Middle School to Cataract Elementary School. The Community Education Center, formerly housed at South Junior, moved to the 60th Street site, while 66th Street School became the Administration Building. The former Administration Building at 607 Walnut Avenue was put up for sale, as was the Administrative Annex on Sixth Street. The Maintenance Building on Elmwood Avenue was closed, and the workers moved to the new administrative offices.

A committee at the school comprised of the principal, parents, teachers, and students chose the new name, and a community celebration was held to officially open Cataract Elementary School in September of that year. It welcomed students from the former 60th and 66th street schools, and offers a pool, full-service cafeteria, air conditioning, and a single floor plan. Cataract Elementary was officially opened September 5, 2007 and boasts a diverse student population of about 515 students.



Historical Significance

"Downtown" 607 Walnut Avenue

At the January 19, 1927 meeting of the Board of Education, a resolution was passed to build an Administration Building. "The present offices," minutes read, "... are entirely inadequate to economically administer a school system as large as the one in Niagara Falls."

Recall that in 1927, the Village of La Salle joined the city of Niagara Falls. An Annexation Parade was held, and the former municipality brought its schools into the District. The clerk of the LaSalle Board of Education wrote a communication to the Falls Board assuring them "whole-hearted support from our faculty." The LaSalle Board of Education also brought \$84,268.46 to the coffers. The increased size of the school district presumably made the need for better offices more pressing.

Therefore, by unanimous vote, the Board opted to construct "a simple office building" and estimated a cost of \$96,000 to purchase land, construct, and equip said building.

The office building was constructed; whether it is "simple" is open to debate.

Opened in 1928, 607 Walnut Avenue was the much-beloved home of the administrative offices of the school district until 2007. The Board of Education building, referred to by staff as simply "downtown," was majestic with its dramatic staircase, dark wood window frames and doors, and high ceilings.

In 2007, as part of the Facing the Future plan, it was determined that the building was in need

of significant repair and that moving the offices to the former 66th Street School would provide an opportunity to consolidate the administrative offices, maintenance personnel, and warehouse facilities all under one roof. With mixed emotions, staff relocated to the 66th Street and 607 was shuttered.

While 630 66th Street offered a more central location for residents and more spacious offices for staff in addition to more parking, many workers continue to miss the cozier feel of 607. Nonetheless, the current location has saved the taxpayers upkeep on three buildings and has allowed the Administration Building to take its place on a street that is lined by schools, both public and Catholic.

607 Walnut Avenue was sold to Housing Visions in November of 2014 and, with help from the city and state, is currently being remodeled as Walnut Avenue Homes. It remains a majestic presence "downtown."



Integration

The 60s were a tumultuous time for race relations around the country, and in Niagara Falls. Desegregating the public schools took time, community input, and many hundreds of hours of discussion, and it involved some real conflict.

The main question was how to accomplish integration in the wake of the 1954 Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling, which stated that "separate but equal" public education was unconstitutional. Integration had been achieved naturally in the high schools and junior highs by sheer number of enrolled students; it was the elementary schools that needed a plan.

The goal was to achieve a reflection of the whole community in every school, that is, to cause a maximum black enrollment in any elementary school to be 28%, plus or minus 10%. This number was arrived at by taking the total percentage of black elementary students in the District (18%) and seeking to deviate from it by no more than 10%. It was decided that Beech Avenue School (now Kalfas) was to be integrated first.

In October of 1968, the Board of Education formed an Advisory Committee on Integration. It was the first step of a very long journey.

Superintendent Weldon Oliver supported neighborhood schools. In the midst of the community struggle to develop a plan to achieve integration, he left on a three-week European vacation. According to published reports, the Board of Education had already made it clear Oliver's contract would not be renewed, owing to student achievement rates on standardized tests and a perceived difficulty in getting staff to work together effectively. His vacation was followed by his departure from his professional post. He was succeeded by Henry J. Kalfas.

By February of 1969, the committee -- now including 27 residents -- had before it 10 proposals on how to integrate Beech Avenue School. The proposals were numbered one to 10. Before a solution was agreed upon, there would be 21.

Interestingly, even in 1969 at least one computer guru was offering the use of a computer to redraw attendance to accommodate integration. This had been used in a community in Indiana, but the result was that all the students who were bussed were black. That solution was unacceptable.

The Niagara Falls Federation of Teachers suggested making Beech a special school—called a More Effective School. The thinking was that a desirable program would encourage parents – black and white – to voluntarily send their children to Beech Avenue.

Another plan suggested that children living west of 15th Street who attended Beech, Hyde Park, or 22nd Street schools could be reassigned to 79th Street School.

Someone suggested that grades four to six could participate in an exchange: students would attend neighborhood schools until grade four, and then swap, based on geography. Students in grades four through six in predominantly white schools would attend predominantly black schools and vice versa.

There was a proposal to eliminate all attendance boundaries city-wide and assign elementary students based on others factors.

The Teachers Association recommended total District integration by September of 1969. The group opposed voluntary bussing.

There was a proposal to bus all students outside their neighborhoods.

There was the Sector Plan that proposed dividing the city into four sectors, representing the four junior highs: Gaskill, LaSalle, North, and South. Within each sector, all elementary schools would have primary grades (up to grade three), but send grades four, five, and six to elementary schools within that sector which had special amenities—a pool, for example. The Sector Plan was favored by June 1969, with the focus on the Gaskill Junior High attendance area, but the plan was deferred due to a lack of community and teacher support.

Time passed.

Now considering Plan 18, which sought to integrate Beech and other schools in the Gaskill sector, the Committee faced real opposition. There was a suggestion that the committee be disbanded; it was criticized for having too many school employees on it and having members on it who had no children. Harwood Bond had been named the Committee's chair after Donald Johnson of Lewiston resigned. Johnson, who was the managing editor of the Niagara Falls Gazette, had faced criticism for not being a resident. Bond suggested that teachers had asked parents to voice objection to Plan 18. He accused the Niagara Falls Teachers Association of "stirring a tempest in a teapot." The teachers preferred a modified version of a previous plan, Plan 17, which called for pupil assignment among North End elementary schools to achieve racial balance at Beech Avenue School.

The Human Relations Commission urged the Board of Education to adopt and implement some plan and complete its work. It offered support for the Advisory Committee for Integration and posited that opponents were merely trying to delay implementation of integration.

The NAACP was by now considering legal action against the Board of Education for its failure to implement a plan. That organization's national office had been threatening a lawsuit for two years by 1969, and had held off at the urging of the local chapter.

The now 38-member Advisory Committee on Integration was still pondering in June whether a plan could be implemented by September.

Black families, meanwhile, resented that two of the three predominantly black schools already had been closed; only Beech Avenue remained. Center Street was closed in 1968, as was Thirteenth Street School. Rev. Glenn Raybon and others boycotted schools after the Board of Education decided to close 13th Street and Center Street schools and bus black students from Cleveland Avenue to 22nd Street. The boycott of 22nd Street School lasted two weeks, while an appeal was made to the Commissioner

of Education. Some black residents who boycotted Cleveland Avenue School noted that their children had been transferred three times in three years in the name of integration.

The feeling in the black community was that they were the families bearing the brunt of the changes. The only black Board of Education member, Arthur Ray, shared the black community's frustration.

By now, a mistrust also had developed between the Advisory Committee and the Board of Education. Superintendent Henry Kalfas valued the Advisory Committee, and warned against rushing to meet the September 1969 self-imposed deadline to integrate Beech Avenue School. Rather, he said, develop a thoughtful plan for District-wide integration and roll it out effectively to avoid exacerbating the resentment festering in the community.

In July of 1969, the Board supported a plan to allow the voluntary enrollment of 150 white students at Beech Avenue School. The previous winter, a number white families had said they were willing to send their children to Beech Avenue. Meanwhile, a number of black families said they were willing to send their children to predominantly white schools; Hyde Park, 39th Street, and LaSalle schools were selected to welcome them.

Another, 15-member committee was established by the Board of Education and charged to review all the plans; implementation was to be postponed for a year or two. The postponement was opposed by Board member Arthur Ray, Advisory Committee Chair and president of the local chapter of the NAACP Harwood Bond, and others. The local paper ran an editorial excoriating the Board of Education for choosing "to walk the twisted and rocky path of expediency rather than the straight and proper road of integrity with all citizens by its further delay of integration for the city's schools."

According to an article that ran August 8, 1969 in the Niagara Falls Gazette, the NAACP filed a formal complaint against the Board with the State Education Commissioner. That complaint was also signed by parents, and representatives of the Human Relations Commission, the New

Black Society, Niagara Coalition, Niagara Community Action Center and Niagara Community Action Program. A subsequent meeting among the Board and its detractors helped ameliorate some ill will, but no solution was reached.

Members of the black community put the Board on notice that they considered that the community had a segregated school system and that the voluntary busing to Beech Avenue School was "tokenism," and that, in light of that, they preferred to have a segregated black school at Beech Avenue.

Concerns over integration were made worse when, for a three nights in August, racial tensions turned into youthful brawls, vandalism, arson, and general disorder in the city's North End and East Side, where states of emergency were declared.

Meanwhile in Albany, discussions took place and laws were being formed relating to whether districts could opt for busing and how it might be funded.

In September, 132 white students began attending Beech Avenue School. Geraldine J. Mann, assistant superintendent for elementary education, presented a plan to the Board of Education penned by that school's principal, Helen Schoninger, that called for a reduced lunch hour at the school so black students who lived nearby might opt to stay on site and eat lunch with white students, some of whom lived at the other end of the city.

Plans for city-wide integration continued to be put forth, and in early 1970 a plan was created to address schools that were predominantly attended by one race or the other: Beech Avenue, Tenth Street, Ashland Avenue, Cayuga Drive, Pacific Avenue, and 24th Street. Attendance circles would be drawn around these racially imbalanced elementary schools, with circles being large enough in each instance to contain 80% white and 20% black residents. Any student living outside that circle would get bused. That was Plan 21, and it was the one that passed.

In 1972, two predominantly white schools, Ashland Avenue and Twenty-second Street, were

shuttered, as was Tenth Street School.

Superintendent Henry J. Kalfas was regarded as a man dedicated to integration. Asked why schools had to do it, he responded that if housing were integrated and employment were integrated, schools would automatically be so.

"The schools are the last agency left to help overcome this situation," he said, "and the school system has to act to correct racial imbalance to fulfill its responsibility."

"If understanding can't be promoted in housing and employment, then by George, let's do it where we can and that's in education."

Despite the circuitous path to integration in Niagara Falls Schools, it was nonetheless held up by Education Commissioner Edward Nyquist as a success story, as it was the largest city in the state — at 86,000 residents — and one of the largest in the country, to achieve voluntary integration at that time.

Beech Avenue School was renamed Henry J. Kalfas School in 1978.

Today, students are still bused, in part to ensure integrated schools. One main reason for busing today is the high rate of transience among students. By today's practice, if a student begins her or his education at one school and then moves, the goal is to have them remain at their original school where possible. This aims to prevent students from having to adjust to multiple schools over the course of elementary education.



Love Canal

No history of Niagara Falls Schools can be written without a look at one of the nation's most infamous environmental calamities; to omit a look at Love Canal would be an insult to those who lived there, worked there, and went to school there.

On February 14, 1955, three schools were opened to accommodate the baby boomers; one of those was 99th Street School.

The school was built on land which had been the dumpsite for chemical waste from Hooker Chemical Company. Hooker did not hide that fact, and even specifically cites "the presence of industrial waste" in documents relating to the transfer of property.

Hooker reluctantly yielded the land to the Board of Education for the purpose of constructing an elementary school. They sold it for one dollar, and sent the Board the quit claim deed for "land approximately 175 feet in width measured from the center line of Colvin Boulevard to the northerly line of Frontier Avenue, and also a strip of land approximately 34.2 feet in width running from the northerly line of Frontier Avenue to the center line of Buffalo Avenue," according to Board minutes of May 5, 1953. The deed "provides specifically that the Board of Education has been advised by Hooker Electro-Chemical Company" that the land was filled "in whole or in part" with chemical waste. The conveyance included a special consideration that Hooker could not be held liable for injuries resulting from this waste.

Basically, it seems Hooker told the Board the best place within that land to build a school, advised against building anything other than surface structures on most parts of the land, and insisted that any future conveyances of the land by the Board must contain the same information Hooker had provided to it.

Hooker had capped the waste with clay caps, and indeed had originally purchased the land in the 1940s because of its high clay content.

Despite the disclaimer from Hooker, the Board apparently trusted that the buried waste was safely contained, and for a time it appeared to be. The Board moved ahead and the school opened in 1955.

In the early 1970s, the Department of Transportation purchased land in the southern portion of Love Canal to build the LaSalle Arterial Highway. The city built sewers. Houses went up. A middle class neighborhood grew up in Love Canal. It may have been during that construction that drums and clay caps were compromised; no one is sure.

In that neighborhood, residents complained of odors in the basements of their houses. Children began to come in from play with chemicals clinging to their clothing, which had seeped up through the ground. Eventually, neighbors shared information with each other about seizures, rashes, asthma, miscarriages, and cancers.

A neighborhood coalition was formed, the Love Canal Homeowners Association, and it brought pressure to bear on local, state, and federal government. Eventually, the area was declared a disaster site and 950 families were re-located. Remediation work was begun on the site. It was a long fight that gave rise to Superfund Legislation, and is one that has been written about extensively in works devoted to that subject. The calamity was covered in the media at the time nationally and internationally.

The school district closed and razed 99th Street School in 1978 and closed 93rd Street School, which occupied the northwest corner of the Love Canal Emergency Declaration Area, in 1980.

Certainly, this was a dark period for the community and the school district.

Tyrone Roundtree lived in Love Canal from the ages of 5 to 18. His family lived in Griffon Manor and he attended 99th Street School.

"I remember I must have been 11 or 12; my brother and I were playing outside. It was August. It was hot, and we were playing on the swings in our yard, playing in the grass. I came in to get a drink and my brother came in behind me. My dad looked up and said "what the ...?" My brother's face was all swollen up like a basketball. We had to go to Mt. St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston and they took care of him, but the doctors didn't know what caused that happen to him."

Tyrone said he knew a family of five in Love Canal who all died within a few years of each other; every one had cancer.

He paints a grim picture of the end of the neighborhood — and the school — in which he spent his youth. "We were one of the last families to leave; I was 18. One day guys in white suits showed up wearing masks and started digging 55-gallon drums out of the ground — hundreds of them. They came to our house to take an air sample; they wouldn't even take off their masks.

"A couple days later there was this big green book in my father's desk, it was two inches thick and full of very big words ... all chemicals."

Attendance: A New Problem?

Hardly.

In fact, today's average daily attendance is the best it has ever been, judging by historical data. A Niagara Falls Gazette article of June 16, 1913 shows the following attendance information for the public schools.

School	No. Registered	Ave. No. Belonging	Ave. Attendance/Month
Cleveland	1092	735	754
5th Street	1127	711	652
High School	702	582	560
Ferry	736	498	366
Whitney	446	340	305
Ashland	474	312	284
Sugar	380	262	247
Third	343	239	203
Center	279	208	190
13	606	413	384
22	391	324	300
Maple	78	74	69



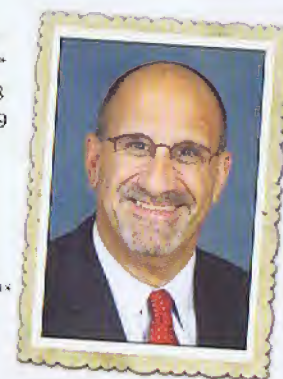
Class of 1894 Niagara Falls Union School Graduates

Miriam Trowbridge Barron
Eva C. Terwilliger
Lotta Elizabeth Bulton
Maude Elizabeth Cannon
Margaret Louise Crehan
Matte Elizabeth Grauer
Grace Daphne Johnson
Esther Barbara Lamkins
Sarah Francis Lamkins
Rosalli Maria Martin

Edwin Jesse Murray
Thomas Alfred Panter
Emma Passaquay
Mary Bell Sampson
Augusta Caroline Schoemacker
Amelia Cjara Senf
Mary Gertrude Shepard
Mary Margaret Wright
Helen Frances Young

Superintendents

Nathaniel L. Benham 1892 – 1901
Reuben A. Taylor 1901 - 1913
Herbert F. Taylor 1913 – 1916
Dr. John B. Laidlaw 1916 – 1925
Dr. James F. Taylor 1925 – 1945 *
Dr. William J. Small 1945 – 1958
Dr. Weldon J. Oliver 1958 – 1969
Henry J. Kalfas 1969 – 1978
Dr. Robert Utter 1978 – 1982
Dr. Reed Hagen 1982 – 1984
William L. Sdao 1984 – 1992
Carmen A. Granto 1992-2009
Cynthia A. Bianco 2009 – 2016 **
Mark Laurrie – 2016 – present



* longest serving

** first female

From the Minutes

June 21, 1898

By Mr. Walsh:

Resolved, That the Police Commissioners be requested to designate all janitors of the school buildings as special policemen of the city, to serve without compensation from the city.
Carried.

March 25, 1898

James E. Trott, whom the body calls "the Father of our Schools," declines reappointment to the Board, due to his age and health. The Board resolves to "... express the hope that he may be spared for many years to receive the honor which is his just due from the people of this city and which we are confident will be cheerfully rendered him."
Carried.

April 28, 1902:

Resolved, That the Board of Education deems the following sums of money as necessary for the carrying on of the schools of this city for the ensuing year and that the President and Clerk prepare a certificate to the effect and present to the Mayor:
For the wages of Superintendent and Teachers, after applying all public school and other monies applicable thereto: \$44,000.00

For the rent of schoolhouses and rooms for school purposes: \$266.72

For the purchase, maintenance, and care of the City School Library: \$7,000.00

July 2, 1903:

Mr. Gaskill moved that the contract for supplying wardrobes be awarded to Finn Bros. at their bid.
Carried.

November 3, 1949

Superintendent William Small recommends "the transfer of Mr. Edward Freeland from firemanto substitute engineer at North Junior."
Carried.

1953

In 1953 there were serious concerns about voter apathy toward the approaching school election that year, as it was the first time that members of the school board would be elected by the residents; up until then, members had been appointed by the mayor.

February 6, 1958

On an explosion of the Niagara Railway Junction on Porter Road, which the Niagara Falls Gazette of January 23, 1958 states in an article by George Gates states was heard "... as far north as the Village of Youngstown and as far south as Kenmore, and northeast in Wilson, 22 miles away." The blast did damage across the city, reportedly moving some homes off their foundations. Extensive damage was done to Hyde Park School and Gaskill Junior High School, while windows were broken and some children cut by glass at 24th Street, Pacific Avenue, 79th Street, 93rd Street, Evershed, Sugar Street, and North Junior High schools.

"The President commended the Administrative, Instructional, and Non-instructional staff and Grant & Co., Insurance Consultants, for their cooperation following the explosion which occurred in the Niagara Junction Railway yards on Wednesday, January 22, 1958. The explosion caused extensive damage to several school buildings and approximately one hundred children were injured by shattered glass. He also expressed appreciation for the assistance given by the members of the community, Police and Fire Departments, Civilian Defense and Doctors."

June 20, 1963

The Committee on Buildings, Grounds, and Purchases recommends the bid for milk, chocolate milk, cream buttermilk, and cottage cheese be awarded to Sealtest.
Carried.

Rich Ice Cream Co. got the ice cream bid.



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"Former Resident Dies in Buffalo"

September 21, 1937. Page 1.

"Trott School Graduates" June 22, 1929. Page 6

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June 6, 1908. Page 1

"Plea Made To Build 60th Street School"

January. 22, 1960. Page 1

"Cadet Teachers Lead in Career Selection; They Learn in Classrooms" January 31, 1965. Page 8-B.

"Short Term Bond Issue Seen Saving \$855,750"

Oct. 28, 1962. Page 4C

"School Future Tied To Neighborhood Idea"

October 8, 1967. Page E16

"Two New Schools Seen as Further Boost to Falls System's Leadership in State" May 1, 1950. Page 12

"Board Acts to Begin Citywide Program By Relighting Ashland Avenue School"

November 21, 1952. Page 18

Former Principal Obituary, May 9, 1921. Page 6

"Mrs. Hughes Quits District" July 24, 1968. Page 1

"Post for Retarded Children Set" Aug 2, 1962. Page 7

"Gym-Hall Wing Voted for School 607"

May 6, 1960. Page 17

"Board Acts to Begin Citywide Program By Relighting Ashland Avenue School" Page 18

Former Principal Obituary NFG, May 9, 1921. Page 6.

"Oh Rats" stand alone photo. May 17, 1971. Page 5.

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"Boycotting Parents Confront School Head."

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An aerial view of the construction underway.

March 19, 1972. Page 2J.

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Norma Higgs "HIGGS: Number of schools in LaSalle grows," August 19, 2013.

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Norma Higgs: "The open classroom concept at Harry E. Abate," October 21, 2013

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Special thanks to Tom Tryniski at www.fultonhistory.com for providing access to archival newspapers.

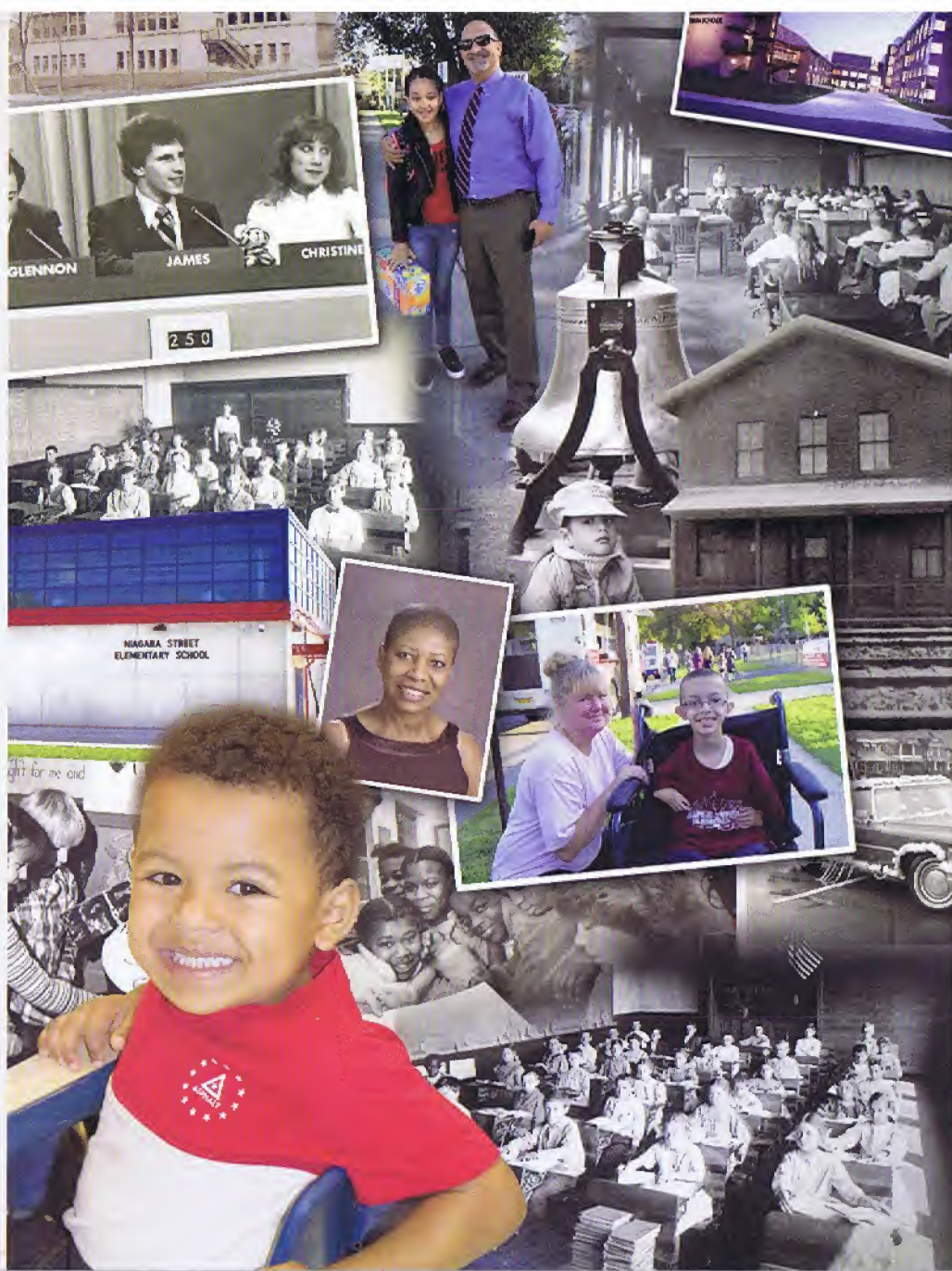
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Niagara Falls City School District

School Days

— By Judie Glaser —

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